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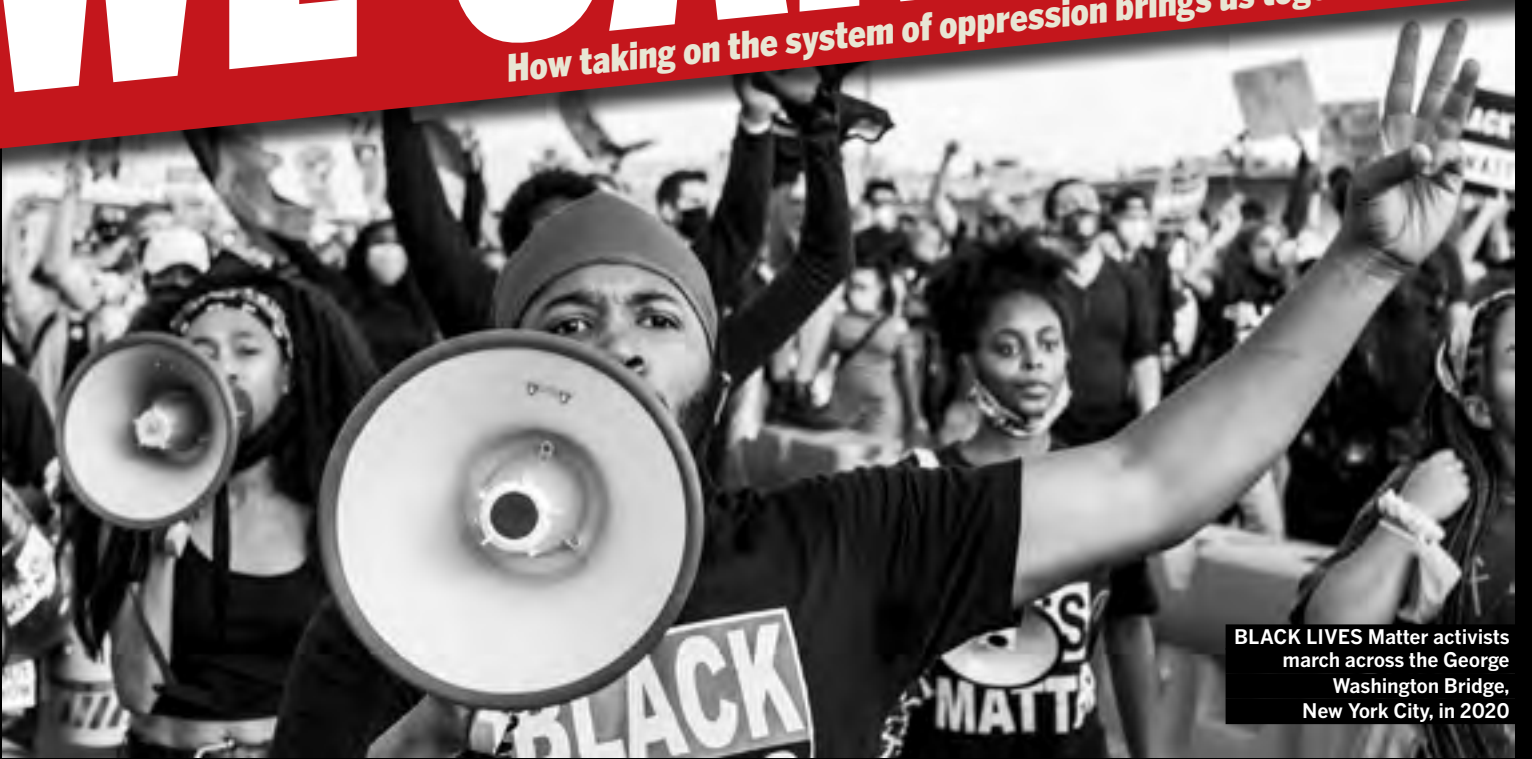
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PALESTINIAN women protesting in Jerusalem

FROM BLACK LIVES MATTER TO PALESTINE
WE CAN WIN
How taking on the system of oppression brings us together >>Page 5



BLACK LIVES Matter activists march across the George Washington Bridge, New York City, in 2020

THE RICH

Record rise in billionaires since this time last year

THE COMBINED wealth of Britain's 250 richest people has grown by a sixth in the past year, according to The Sunday Times Rich List

The number of billionaires has jumped from 147 to 171. At the same time some 700,000 people have been pushed into poverty by the pandemic.

>>Page 2

CORONAVIRUS



The Tories' covid plan was for herd immunity

DOMINIC CUMMINGS was set to give evidence to parliament this week that could expose some of the lies about the Tories deadly handling of the pandemic.

He has already revealed senior ministers planned to respond to Covid-19 by letting infections rip through Britain.

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RESISTANCE

Imperialism and the struggles for national liberation

SOCIALISTS SAY we want to live in a world without nations and borders.

Does that mean we can ignore struggles for national independence such as those in Kashmir, Kurdistan and Palestine, and focus solely on class struggle?

>>Pages 14&15



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'Jenny Harries told us, the same week herd immunity was the official plan, masks are a 'BAD idea'

Dominic Cummings spills the beans on the government plan for Covid. Harries in now the boss of NHS Test and Trace

'Preparations and competent people in charge'

Everything would have been OK if Cummings had been in charge—though he sort of was at the time

'To build up some degree of herd immunity whilst protecting the most vulnerable'

Sir Patrick Vallance told BBC Radio 4's Today programme in March 2020

'Defund the BBC'

Former Sun editor Kelvin Mackenzie, who once put Diana's covertly recorded private phone calls on a premium-rate line

'BBC's Diana shame'

The Sun headline over eight pages on the Diana interview scandal. They ran nine pages on the original interview

'Their stinking hypocrisy is not lost on us'

The Sun



Tough year for rich with record rise in billionaires

ACCORDING TO the The Sunday Times Rich List the combined wealth of Britain's 250 richest people has grown by a sixth in the past year. It is up from £566 billion to £658 billion.

The number of billionaires has jumped from 147 to a record 171.

At the same time some 700,000 people have been pushed into poverty by the pandemic.

More than half of the wealth of the top 2,000 people (£508 billion) is concentrated among the richest 100.

The 171 billionaires have a combined wealth of £597 billion.

A one-off flat tax of 5 percent on all their wealth over a billion pounds would raise £19 billion, even accounting for avoidance and the cost of setting up the scheme.

A 5 percent tax would not leave Britain's billionaires out of pocket.

The richest person in Britain, Sir Leonard Blavatnik would pay £1.1 billion. Blavatnik's fortune surged by £7.2 billion to around £23 billion last

£23 billion
Sir Leonard Blavatnik

£21.46 billion
David and Simon Reuben

£17 billion
Sri and Gopi Hinduja and family

£16.3 billion
Sir James Dyson and family

£14.68 billion
Lakshmi Mittal and family

£13.4 billion
Alisher Usmanov

£13 billion
Kirsten and Jorn Rausing

£12.1 billion
Roman Abramovich

£12.01 billion
Charlene de Carvalho-Heineken

£11 billion
Guy Weston and family

year. At the "poorer" end, Lord Sugar would pay a tax bill of just £10 million from his £1.2 billion fortune.

About 1,800 people have wealth of £100 million or more. Taxing all wealth over £100 million at 10 percent would raise a £69 billion. This would cover the cost of furlough—£61 billion as of April 2021—with cash to spare for 18 new hospitals costing £450 million each.

Despite texting Boris Johnson, James Dyson, meanwhile, slipped back to fourth in the ranking after his wealth only increased by £100 million to £16.3 billion.

Property investors David and Simon Reuben, who reached the second spot after their wealth rose £5.46 billion to £21.46 billion.

Meanwhile, Hugh Grosvenor, the Duke of Westminster, known for owning a large portion of the capital's prime real estate has seen his wealth fall slightly this year. His fortune has shrunk by £241 million and he now has a mere £10.1 billion.

FULL MARKS to the Treasury for its imaginative excuse in not disclosing Sir Tom Scholar's replies to David Cameron's texts. Scholar, permanent secretary to the Treasury, was locked out of his phone when an incorrect password was entered several times, meaning it was reset, with all the content wiped.

The Treasury admits that Scholar has met Cameron twice since the ex-PM left office, but it insists there was no need to declare the get-togethers because they were social.

Sir Tom Scholar

THERESA MAY has netted a quarter of a million pounds for virtual speeches to US audiences since April.

There has, though, been some apparent depreciation, perhaps as international audiences adjust to the reality of a Theresa May after-dinner speech.

Last year she earned £136,000 for a speech. But now she's on a humble £39,000 per speech.

Boris's butler brings Tory donor's food parcels

A BUTLER secretly brought around £27,000 of luxury organic food into Downing Street for the prime minister during the pandemic.

The food was said to be "smuggled" in unmarked bags which included pre-prepared meals and wine.

Some of the items appeared to have been covered by the wife of a Tory donor. The fancy food was first delivered in May last year, and the drop-offs continued until February.

The meals were "designed to build Boris Johnson's strength back up after he was admitted to intensive care with coronavirus".

Daylesford organic farm shops, which is owned by Lady Carole Bamford, put together a healthy food plan and supplied the meals at cost price.

She is married to Lord Bamford, who is the owner of JCB.

His companies have given £10 million to the Tories.

Covering up the cracks in trains?

MORE THAN 150 trains built and maintained by Hitachi were pulled from service by Great Western Railway and London North Eastern Railway without warning recently.

Engineers had found cracks on parts of their chassis, causing severe disruption to services.

Why did the cracks happen? There's one possibility that the media do not seem to be following up. In November 2014 the Kobe Steel firm announced, "that it has begun deliveries of aluminium extruded shapes to Hitachi Ltd for use in the railway car body for the Intercity Express Programme in

the United Kingdom."

Three years later Kobe admitted falsifying quality data, possibly for as long as a decade.

An internal investigation had found 70 cases of data tampering at its Kobelco Research unit.

Isn't it time to look again at whether those trains really did receive the specifications promised?

Covid death rate hidden

THE REAL global death toll from Covid-19 is between 7.1 million and 12.7 million, with a central estimate of 10.2 million. The official figure of 3.3 million represents, at best, a bit less than half the true toll, and at worst only about a quarter of it.

The numbers come from a major analysis in The Economist bosses' magazine. It attempted to model the level of excess mortality over the course of the pandemic in countries that do not report it.

The magazine says, "Most of the deaths caused by Covid-19 but not attributed to it are found in low and middle income countries."

"Our figures give a death rate for the mostly rich countries of 1.17 times the official number. The estimated death rate for sub-Saharan Africa is 14 times the official number."

The model suggests India "is seeing between 6,000 and 31,000 excess deaths a day, well in excess of official figures around the 4,000 mark."

MOD's £3 billion tank tanks

IT IS the tank that has cost more than £3 billion with nothing to show for it.

Parliament's spending watchdog has described as "extraordinary" new payments of nearly £600 million for Ajax light tanks, which the Ministry of Defence rejected as unsafe.

It emerged in 2019 that there were problems with the first batch of an order for 589 Ajax vehicles.

Now, documents released under freedom of information laws show the contractor, America's General Dynamics, was nevertheless paid £577 million.

Problems with the £5.5 billion programme surfaced in late 2019 when General Dynamics was supposed to have delivered the first 20 vehicles.

The latest round of payments takes the amount spent on the Ajax programme to more than £3.2 billion, according to ministry data.

Technical experts discovered "safety issues", including excessive vibration that prevented cannons being fired on the move, so the army refused to accept them. Test crews also reported that they were too noisy to sit in.

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180,000 march for Palestine in London

by ISABEL RINGROSE

AROUND 180,000 people marched in central London on Saturday to demand freedom for Palestine.

Protesters carried Palestinian flags and flares and brought anger to the streets. It had an extraordinary feeling of militancy and solidarity and combined anger at Israel with determination to win.

Crowds assembled at Embankment and marched past parliament to Hyde Park. The march had many young Muslim women on it.

Protesters Marie, Nadia and Miriam said it was “amazing” that so many people took to the streets. “I didn’t think so many people would be out,” Nadia said.

Marie said “it’s very important” that so many people are protesting.

“The media shows one side,” she said. “We need to show the other side.”

Another protester said that, thanks to social media, the world can now see what’s happening in Palestine. “And we can show that we support them here,” she added.

Hayat is a Palestinian living inside Israel’s official borders in Tel Aviv. She can’t get a flight home because of the Israeli attacks. “I’m worried for my friends and family,” she told Socialist Worker.

“Israeli settlers are marking out Arab houses and incite violence on the people who live there.

“They’re trying to kill everyone who looks like an Arab. My mum wears a hijab and she needed to go to the hospital. I had to tell her not to leave the house because it isn’t safe.”

Hayat explained that inside official Israel, Palestinians receive worse education, have little democracy and “are second class citizens”. “Not one Arab has been given land, but the settlers get ours,” she said.



PRO-PALESTINE SUPPORTERS crammed into Whitehall

PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN



Sending a clear message

“Israel always wants more and Palestinians can’t build houses. Israelis built a village on my family’s land but we’re only allowed a small bit to farm on.”

At the demonstration protesters chanted, “Free, free Palestine,” and, “Israel is a terror state.” Others chanted, “End the aggression, stop the crimes, Israel out of Palestine.” Placards read, “End the occupation,” “Stop bombing Gaza,” and, “Sanctions on Israel.”

Zein told Socialist Worker she “wholeheartedly supports the liberation of Palestine”. “Britain and the US need to cut funding to Israel,” she added. “The way to make that happen

is protest and to boycott—that’s what has the most impact.”

Zein said the way to free Palestine is a “one state solution”.

“A two state solution doesn’t work. Israel isn’t going to hand back land. Before 1948 Palestinians, Arabs, Christians, Muslims, and Jews lived together.”

The demonstration this week was twice the size of the week before. And it had a feeling of wanting to do more than simply go through the motions of protest.

The anger and militancy need to be channelled into concerted pressure on the Israeli regime and its backers, not least Boris Johnson’s Tories.

Protests spread and grow

THERE WAS similar anger in protests across Britain, including in Newcastle, Lancaster, Nottingham, Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Derby and Cardiff.

Nathan from Newcastle said, “There were up to 750 people here. People were angry about Gaza, but they didn’t want to stop protesting against the whole apartheid regime.”

Some 500 people joined a protest in Lancaster, organised by activists from the university’s Friends of Palestine society. They gathered at Dalton

Square, then took to the road for an impromptu march around the city.

Audrey from Lancaster told Socialist Worker, “A lot of the speeches were about Israel’s

long-term abuse of Palestinians. People knew that Israel had already invaded the Al-Aqsa mosque since the ceasefire.”

And in Nottingham, 500 people marched, Richard said, “The anger is not over just because there’s been a ceasefire. It doesn’t change anything—and that was the gist of a lot of the speeches.”



Over 100 protest in Wigan

PICTURE: BARRY CONWAY



Flares on the protest in Derby

PICTURE: SUE ARGUE

Ceasefire doesn’t stop Palestine protests

PROTESTS TOOK place in as many as 63 cities and towns across Britain on Saturday.

They showed that even though Israel’s bombing had stopped for the moment, people are still angry at Israel’s crimes.

Around 4,000 people joined a march in Manchester city centre.

The protest gathered in Piccadilly Gardens and marched around the city before returning for a rally.

Martin, who joined the protest, told Socialist Worker, “It was very young and angry, with lots of people from Palestine and the Middle East.

“There was a lot of anger at the role of Israel and its history of persecuting the Palestinians.”

Hundreds also joined a large, loud protest through Bristol, marching from the Shah Jalal Mosque to College Green in the city centre.

Admiration

One speaker at College Green said, “In solidarity with the people of Palestine, we stand in admiration with the bravery of the Palestinians in the face of the brutality of the Israeli forces.

“And we are going to continue to do so, until these brutal, savage, crimes end.”

There were as many as 1,500 people on the march in Birmingham.

Hope, an activist, said, “It was super young and super militant.

“We went marching all around Birmingham, and shut down the roads.”

Hope added the ceasefire had “If anything made people more determined. What they didn’t want to happen was what happened other times when Palestinians get screwed over again.”

Bus services were forced to halt as 1,000 gathered in Edinburgh city centre.

They waved flags in solidarity with Palestinians.

On Sunday several hundred people demonstrated in Brighton
Nick Clark

Socialist Worker

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Israeli cops bring home war against Palestine

Israel makes it clear that it will try to crush Palestinian resistance after ceasefire says Nick Clark

MILITARISED ISRAELI cops are waging a campaign of fear and intimidation against Palestinians inside Israel's own borders.

Footage from the city of Jaffa shows border cops terrorising Palestinian neighbourhoods with stun grenades and night time raids. Palestinians also report facing daily harassment at newly-set up police checkpoints and being spied on by plain clothes cops.

Cops have also begun mass arrests against Palestinians in Israel who took part in protests and defended their neighbourhoods from right wing Israelis.

The increased repression comes after Palestinian citizens of Israel took the lead in a wave of revolt across all of Palestine (see pages 10&11).

Now Israel is sending border cops to try and put them down.

In a report in Israeli newspaper Haaretz, Palestinians describe police incursions into their neighbourhoods in the middle of the night.

The stories—some of them backed up by video—follow a pattern. Police, armed with assault rifles, step out of armoured vehicles and throw stun grenades at people's homes in all directions.

One Palestinian, Wisam Abu Nar, described an attack on his family home. "The entire family was sitting outside the house," he said.

Shock

"A police van passed. Suddenly, and it's not clear why, they started throwing grenades at us into the yard, at my 70 year old father who came out to talk to them. The children were in shock and cried."

Another video, filmed by Palestinian resident Ibrahim Suri, captures the moment police shot him with a sponge-tipped or rubber-coated bullet for filming them.

"I was sitting at home. I saw forces in the street, entering and leaving every hour or two, throwing stun grenades in all directions and indiscriminately," he said.

BACK STORY

The resistance of the Palestinian people is terrifying Israel's leaders.

● Palestinians who work inside Israel took part in a general strike last week

● The strike hit the Israeli construction industry hardest. But also hit the public transport and cleaning services too

● Strikes like these have the power to inspire Palestinian in all occupied territories and across the region

"I filmed until they saw me. I saw someone pointing upward to his friend. I told him 'If you want to shoot me, shoot me, I'm in a democratic country and I can still document.'

Grenade

"And then he really did shoot at me, in my worst dreams I didn't think that he would really shoot at me. After they shot me in the face, they also threw a stun grenade on the roof."

Palestinians also report that, during the day, police stop them at checkpoints and demand to see ID. Cops also target young Palestinian men on motorbikes, confiscating their keys, and using minor traffic offences as an excuse.

The repression comes after Israel's government approved the use of militarised security forces against Palestinians in Israeli cities.

Palestinians had protested in solidarity with those in the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, and also defended themselves from attacks by armed Israeli gangs.

The cops' methods are almost identical to those Israel uses to repress Palestinians in the militarily occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem. They expose Israel's lie that Palestinian citizens are treated equally to Jews.

Now it's clear that Palestinians in all parts of Palestine are united under the same system of racism and violence against them.

ISRAELI POLICE arrest a Palestinian man in East Jerusalem after a raid in 2019

Netanyahu threatens more violence if Hamas resistance fires rockets

WARMONGER PRIME minister Binyamin Netanyahu threatened even more violence against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

He and his defence minister Benny Gantz want to control the "reconstruction" of Gaza to squeeze the resistance group Hamas, which governs there.

Netanyahu said Israel would respond with "a whole new level of force" if Hamas ever fires rockets again.

Israel's nine-day assault on Gaza, which ended last Friday killed 232 people, including at least 65 children.

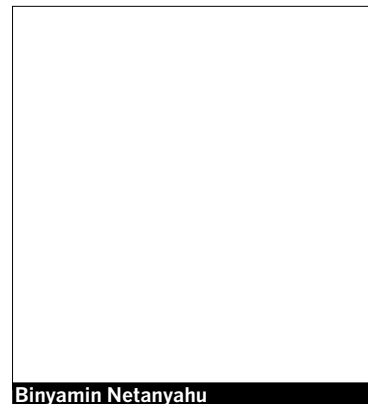
The assault also forced at least 58,000 Palestinians to flee their homes.

It destroyed 1,000 homes, made 1,800 unfit for living, and damaged another 14,900.

Residents of the Gaza Strip had just a few hours of electricity a day during the assault.

One resident, Salma, told Socialist Worker, "The magnitude of the destruction is huge. The war this time was the most difficult—worse than in 2014, 2012 and 2008."

She added, "Everybody is looking forward, trying to



Binyamin Netanyahu

strengthen themselves. We need to cry, find some time to speak about it, share some memories and build some resilience."

But, she said, "It is a mixed feeling. The war has ended but the siege is still going on."

Resist

Israel has kept Gaza under siege since 2007, shortly after Hamas won Palestinian elections.

Hamas has gained some new support among Palestinians for being seen to resist Israel. It also declared victory after Israel failed to stop it from firing rockets.

Hamas's leaders want to use support to be recognised as legitimate representatives of Palestinians by rulers of nearby Arab states.

Last week's ceasefire was mediated by Egypt.

Now Gantz wants to use the siege to put the Palestinian Authority (PA), which governs in the West Bank, in charge of the "reconstruction" of the Gaza Strip.

And he wants the PA, not Hamas, to be seen as the "legitimate" Palestinian leadership.

The other side of this is to threaten more violence against Gaza if Hamas dares to object.

But Salma said Israel's latest assault showed solidarity was growing among Palestinians and beyond.

"This time Israel could not tell its own story and have people believe it," she said.

"They could not claim it is a war between two balanced forces because the destruction is obvious.

"And this time, all the Palestinians stood beside each other, in Israel, in the West Bank and in Jerusalem."

New assault on Palestinians in Jerusalem and West Bank

ISRAEL launched a new assault on Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank last Friday—just hours after declaring a ceasefire on the Gaza Strip.

Cops stormed the site of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem where hundreds of people had gathered for Friday prayers. They also attacked demonstrations in the militarily occupied West Bank.

It was a deliberate show of force by Israel, sending the message that it hasn't ended its war on Palestinian resistance.

Police attacked Palestinians at Al-Aqsa, who had begun a demonstration after Friday prayers.

They stormed the mosque after a group of demonstrators raised the Palestinian flag and chanted in support of resistance group Hamas.

Settler groups want to force Palestinians out of Jerusalem, and say their goal is to demolish the mosque and replace it with a Jewish temple. They frequently storm the site of the mosque as a provocation—always protected by Israeli cops.

Israeli forces also fired tear gas at a

demonstration in the West Bank city of Hebron.

And on Saturday, cops attacked a peaceful protest of a few hundred Palestinians in the Jerusalem neighbourhood Sheikh Jarrah.

Launched

Police attacks on protesters in Sheikh Jarrah and at Al-Aqsa earlier this month sparked the revolt that has now spread across Palestine.

Protests spread to cities inside Israel's borders and in the West Bank, while resistance group Hamas launched rockets at Israel from inside the Gaza Strip.

Now Israel is trying to stamp out

revolt—and prove it hasn't been beaten by Palestinian resistance.

Hamas claimed the ceasefire—which ended a week of Israeli airstrikes on Gaza—contained “guarantees” from Israel that it would end its aggression in Jerusalem.

Israel denied this—and has now attacked Palestinians there just to prove it.

Israeli politicians want to show they haven't been beaten by Palestinian resistance. They also fear that the wave of protests could grow into an even bigger revolt.

Yet so far attempts to crush the revolt has only fuelled more determined resistance from Palestinians.

Fifth Israeli election possible

ISRAELI POLITICIANS are using the aftermath of the assault on Gaza to try and break a long-running political crisis.

Political parties in Israel are struggling to form a government following their fourth election in two years.

Prime minister Netanyahu hoped that the assault on Gaza would allow him to rally other right wing parties into a coalition behind him.

But a poll following the ceasefire shows there is still no majority support for any political party.

Instead, some 47 percent of people said they opposed

the ceasefire on Gaza because it failed to disarm Hamas as Netanyahu had promised it would.

Nationalist leader Naftali Bennett has attacked Netanyahu's government for failing to defeat Hamas.

“The state's deterrence—in the face of a group of terrorists in Gaza and in the face of armed gangs inside Israel—is at the lowest point in its history,” he wrote on Facebook.

Netanyahu's main opponent, Yesh Atid, has until Wednesday of next week to form a government. Bennett's support could help them form a government and end

Netanyahu's time as prime minister. But many of Bennett's supporters would see this as a betrayal, as Yesh Atid is not seen as right wing.

It could mean Israel heads for a fifth election—where all political parties fight to be the “toughest” on Palestinian resistance.

Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

BLM AND PALESTINE—UNITED IN STRUGGLE

ONE YEAR ago the police murder of George Floyd sparked waves of anger and resistance around the world. Rage against a racist system spread internationally. Palestinians stood in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement linking the struggle to their own.

A mural of George Floyd was painted on the separation wall in the West Bank and protests in east Jerusalem held up placards with the slogan, “From the USA to Palestine, racism is a crime.”

The power and militancy of the movement significantly changed the international political landscape.

Twelve months on, the confidence of working class people to fight back against inequality and oppression has grown.

This newfound confidence was on display when hundreds mobilised at short notice to successfully stop an immigration raid in Glasgow.

And the 1800,000 strong Palestine demonstration in London on Saturday showed that years of attacks couldn't silence solidarity. Many of the protesters that took to the streets after the killing of

Floyd understood that racism was deeply rooted within our institutions—in this case mainly the police.

As a result calls to defund and abolish the police have become increasingly popular.

More broadly there has been a growing understanding that racism is symptomatic of the system we live in. And that racism, colonialism and imperialism all flow from the same source—capitalism.

This understanding of racism means solidarity between oppressed groups becomes easier to win. In the present, this means many activists are linking BLM and the Palestinian struggle.

The official BLM Twitter account tweeted their solidarity with the

Racism, colonialism and imperialism all flow from the same source

Palestinians last week. “We are a movement committed to ending settler colonialism in all forms and will continue to advocate for Palestinian liberation,” it said.

The linking of different oppressed groups struggles is terrifying to the ruling class. It defies their tactic of using racism to divide working class people.

Because of this, the ruling class will attempt to destroy the solidarity that threatens their dominance.

The Sewell report on racism and ethnic disparities, released in March, was an attempt to do just that. It denied the existence of institutional racism in order to fragment the united opposition.

The Tories' new policing bill which seeks to restrict protests is another way the ruling class will suppress resistance.

Building and maintaining radical movements are essential to resist these attacks. From the Kill the Bill protests to the Palestine solidarity movement.

It's the job of socialists within these movements to say the fights are all part of the same struggle against capitalism. And to turn anger at racism, sexism and imperialism into revolution.

MORGAN REPORT CENSORED

DANIEL MORGAN was killed with an axe in 1987.

Socialist Worker has long argued that the murder and its cover-up lies at the heart of the phone hacking scandal and much more. The police admitted to corruption in the first of the investigations into the murder.

Over the years a clandestine network has been revealed, involving conmen and bent coppers, sub-contracted by private detectives paid by the media.

And in the shadows were

the people who carried out the establishment's dirty work.

An independent panel has been investigating the case for eight years—it was supposed to take a year—and had been expected to publish its report last week. But Priti Patel, the home secretary, ordered that her department must first censor the report.

The Home Office has said it has a duty to ensure the report complies with “human rights and national security considerations”.

A team from the Met has

already spent ten days poring over the report to check whether any redactions were needed to protect the cops. Met boss Dame Cressida Dick is likely to be specifically criticised over Scotland Yard's obstruction to the inquiry. But so are many others.

Whether Patel is helping the cops, the Murdoch media empire, or simply just being obstructive for the sake of it, is unclear.

The continued cover-up of the murder of Daniel Morgan is unsustainable.

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ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Israel's strategy fuels resistance

THERE WAS never any doubt that the giant Israeli military machine could inflict terrible death and devastation on Gaza. But in a national liberation struggle like that of the Palestinians, politics trumps military might.

Anyone who's seen Gillo Pontecorvo's great movie knows that the French army won the Battle of Algiers in 1956. But the sustained struggle eventually broke the will of the French ruling class to hang onto Algeria.

Before this latest war, Israel's corrupt right wing prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu could claim to have silenced the Palestinians.

He had used a shared hatred of the Islamic Republican regime in Iran to draw close to the ultra-rich Gulf autocracies.

With Donald Trump's enthusiastic support, he signed a peace deal last year with the United Arab Emirates. He hoped to achieve a similar "Abraham accord" with the chief regional power-broker, Saudi Arabia.

The Islamist movement Hamas was caged up in Gaza. The corrupt and ineffective Palestinian Authority (PA) nominally responsible for the West Bank and east Jerusalem cancelled elections for fear Hamas would win again.

Netanyahu repeatedly threatened to annex parts of these occupied territories.

But then he overreached himself. Struggling to hang onto office, and to stay out of prison, Netanyahu encouraged his far right allies to step up their campaign to dispossess Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of east Jerusalem.

This campaign blew up in his face. The Palestinians fought back. The displays of Israeli arrogance and brutality brought the Palestinian minority in Israel itself onto the streets. Above all, this saw riot police repeatedly invading the Al-Aqsa mosque, one of the holiest Islamic places.

Inside Israel's borders, Palestinians are one fifth of the Israeli population. They are second-class citizens in a state that recently proclaimed itself the "nation state of the Jewish people".

As right-wing Jewish settlers tried to drive the Israeli Palestinians back, the protests spread to the West Bank. And then Hamas weighed in with rocket salvos in support of the Palestinians of Jerusalem.

Israeli ex-prime minister Ehud Olmert commented, "How do you measure success or failure? On one hand, you have the most powerful military empire in the entire region, and on the other hand, a terrorist organisation that has only one thing—rockets, and rather primitive ones. The fact is that Hamas successfully intimidated almost the entire country."

Suffered

It's noteworthy that Netanyahu didn't dare send ground troops into Gaza, no doubt fearful of the casualties the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) suffered there during the last war in 2014. One expert told the Financial Times, "The Israelis have not wanted to go in there because it's bloody work, and they don't want to lose a lot of people [or have] house-to-house conflict."

So the military standoff between Hamas and the IDF remains.

But Hamas has demonstrated Gaza's ability to endure and has challenged the PA's claim to lead the Palestinians elsewhere. "Hamas breaks out of its Gaza cage," as one commentator put it.

Most important of all, the Palestinians have asserted themselves as one people that defies Israel's attempts to silence and fragment them. This makes it much harder for the Gulf regimes to draw closer to Israel. The Saudi monarchy proclaims itself the guardian of the Muslim holy places. Ignoring the desecration of Al-Aqsa plays into the hands of its regional rivals, Iran and Turkey.

Netanyahu's strategy is self-undermining in the longer term as well. He has sabotaged the "peace process" that started under Washington's sponsorship in the early 1990s. More specifically he is destroying the two-state solution in which Israel would co-exist with the PA in the occupied territories.

The more he succeeds, the more he leaves the Palestinians with only one option—to fight for a single democratic state in the whole of historic Palestine.

This won't come easily and without upheavals in the entire region. But the closer the Gulf autocracies and the Egyptian military dictatorship stick to Israel, the more they feed the flames of revolt that will someday consume them.

JOE BIDEN and Binyamin Netanyahu are old allies

Ceasefire moves revealed nature of US-Israel relations

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

AFTER A series of assaults on Gaza, which killed at least 248 Palestinians, US president Joe Biden called for a "pathway to a ceasefire" last Wednesday.

In the days before, Biden had been sure to support the bloodshed Israel caused. He said that Israel's murderous retaliation to Hamas rockets had "not been a significant overreaction".

As Israeli airstrikes rained down death, the US blocked four times a UN security council statement in support of de-escalating the violence.

In the end, because of the US refusal to back it, the statement was scrapped.

Biden's ceasefire call was not about preserving Palestinian lives. It was to do with an assessment of the resistance to Israel and satisfying US allies.

Biden has been a strong supporter of Israel for his entire political career.

Contain

But now the US is attempting to contain the waves of solidarity that spread across the Middle East—which forced some Arab leaders to speak out against Israel.

Biden mentioned that alongside Israel's prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, he has had conversations with Egypt's president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas. He even thanked the

Egyptians for their role in brokering the agreement.

The US secretary of state Antony Blinken reportedly intends to visit Israeli and Palestinian leaders soon. He will also stop in Egypt and Jordan.

The US does not want to lose its Arab allies—or for them to face mass movements on the streets.

It has spent the past few years trying to unite Israel with the rulers of nearby Arab states that support its control of the Middle East.

Gaza under attack

Ceasefire isn't the end

ANNOUNCING the ceasefire last week statement from Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu boasted of the "great accomplishments" of Israel's military.

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip describe it as the most intense airstrikes they have ever endured.

But for all the killing, the ceasefire is not a victory for Israel.

Israel hoped its airstrikes on Gaza would silence Hamas, which governs the strip, and turn the focus away from Jerusalem.

Yet the assault did not stop the resistance groups firing volleys of

rockets towards Israel.

And a huge wave of protests and strikes spread across all of Palestine.

Israeli politicians, generals and commentators are all terrified that this resistance by ordinary people will be much harder to stamp out.

Even if the ceasefire holds it won't end the occupation and Israel's racist policies towards Palestinians.

The settlements, checkpoints and laws that discriminate against Palestinians will remain—as will the siege of Gaza.

The battle for liberation continues.

Former president Donald Trump's method was to stand with every significant demand from Israel and to try to force Arab leaders to make deals with Israel.

Biden has instead tried to look more "balanced".

He said he "fully supports Israel's right to defend itself against indiscriminate rocket attacks from Hamas and Palestinian terrorist organisations."

And also pledged his "full support to replenish Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system."

Meagre

While suggesting some meagre handouts to Palestinians, Biden made clear, "We will do this in full partnership with the Palestinian Authority, not Hamas in a manner that does not permit Hamas to simply restock its military arsenal."

Significantly, once Biden had decided a ceasefire was a good idea, Israel agreed to one.

It's sometimes suggested that Israel determines US policy.

But although Israel does not always act exactly as the US wants, the dominant direction of influence is that US imperialism uses Israel for its own ends.

That means the US is fully implicated in all of Israel's crimes.

It is Biden's continuing support that enables Netanyahu and his partners in Israel to carry out murder.

Pupils hold protests for Palestine in schools

by SAM ORD

STUDENTS IN schools and colleges in parts of Britain protested in solidarity with Palestinians facing Israeli terror.

As break ended on Wednesday of last week at Clapton Girls' Academy in east London, students sat down and chanted "Free Palestine".

They refused to return to lessons. Clapton Girls' student Mina told Socialist Worker, "They were peaceful protests with students sitting on the floor with Palestinian flags to make a statement to the school about human rights."

"Teachers in the school had told students that they had been antisemitic which was not the case at all."

"Supporting Palestine for these students was a means of standing up for Palestinians' human rights."

"Students were appalled as the school claimed that Palestine flags were 'political' and that they had no choice but to condemn the students' actions."

"Clapton Girls' Academy and sixth form need to address the Palestine situation immediately."

Des Barrow, a teacher at the school, told Socialist Worker, "I expected them to stay out for ten or maybe 15 minutes, but they were there for the whole day, until the end of school."

Fantastic

He added, "The pupils were very vocal and loud, they had homemade signs and gave educational speeches. It was fantastic."

"Many pupils linked Palestine to Black Lives Matter and broader issues. They made badges and posters. I haven't seen anything like this since students walked out over the Iraq war two decades ago."

In Manchester, management closed Loreto College on Tuesday of last week after hearing about a planned protest. Students assembled at the college gates and decided to march.

Around 200 students waved flags, painted faces and held flares as members of the public joined the march.

Around 250 people gathered at the march endpoint in Piccadilly Gardens holding signs such as "Stop arming Israel". Students at Batley

BACK STORY

Israel's attacks on Palestinians—in occupied territories and within Israeli borders—has sent thousands to the streets

● Students are now taking up the fight in schools and colleges

● At Clapton Girls' Academy, in east London, students organised a protest. And in Manchester students marched after management closed down a protest in a college

● Young people are driving the fight, which should inspire more action

Grammar School, West Yorkshire, organised a protest, as did students at St John Fisher Academy in Dewsbury.

Another protest held last Tuesday at Coombe Girls' School in Kingston, south west London, was broken up by the headteacher.

Initiatives

Other pupils are trying to launch similar initiatives but are also being set back by the school management.

One student based in Redditch, Worcestershire, told Socialist Worker, "My school announced in a virtual assembly that if anyone is openly pro-Palestine or protests for the freedom of Palestine on school grounds, they can't attend prom."

"And they can't go to sixth form next year."

"I was very disappointed as I've always thought highly of my school. I also feel that my school has done a huge disservice to Muslim students."

"The Israeli state has been vandalising sacred mosques and ethnically cleansing Muslim Palestinians."

"You can't be neutral and threaten students to also stay neutral at the expense of their post-16 education."

The Palestinian resistance has inspired millions of people internationally. Students standing up should inspire more students and workers to follow.

For a video of Clapton Girls' school protest go to bit.ly/ClaptonProtest



On other pages...

Tories' Covid-19 plan was lethal
herd immunity >>Page 20



PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

YOUNG PEOPLE, such as these marching in London last week, are at the centre of the movement

Victory for Pimlico students as school head resigns after protests

PUPILS AT Pimlico Academy in central London are celebrating their headteacher's resignation following allegations of racism.

And, in another blow to bosses, NEU union members at the school voted by 93 percent for strikes over "unacceptable management style" on an 85 percent turnout.

Headteacher Daniel Smith stepped down early last week.

Hundreds of pupils had held an anti-racist protest at the school in March, occupying the basketball court and refusing to return to lessons on the last day of term.

One Pimlico student told Socialist Worker, "This is a result of the protest—he told us he was 'in it for the long run'."

"We're all very happy he's leaving."

Pupils were angry over a new uniform policy.

It banned hijabs that were "too colourful" and hairstyles that "block the views of others"—such as Afro hair.

They also expressed anger over changes to the curriculum and the waving of the Union flag.

The student added, "Institutional racism has always been an issue within our own and many other schools."

"In our school's case the racism was very obvious to all."



Protest at Pimlico in March

"It was as if they didn't even bother trying to hide their discriminatory views."

After the protest Tory donor Lord Nash and former stockbroker Lady Nash—co-chairs of Future Academies that run the school—wrote to parents threatening students with expulsion.

Horrible

"Their response to the protest was horrible," said the student.

"And it's been made clear that they don't actually care about their students or their wellbeing."

Liza Begum, a local Labour councillor, told Socialist Worker, "Threatening students with exclusion for exercising their right to protest was absolutely

unacceptable. School is a place for children to flourish, not a place students dread to attend."

Parents issued a statement with a list of demands last month, including the removal of Smith from his position of headteacher.

Others called for decolonising the curriculum, prioritising anti-racism and equality in decision making and a review of the behaviour policy.

In an email to staff, Smith said that the current deputy head would become acting principal from 31 May.

He said, "I will be working with [the deputy head] to ensure a smooth transition in the coming weeks."

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing commitment to our students in what has been the most challenging of times."

The student added, "The acting principal at the moment is our previous vice principal Tony Oulton who is sympathetic to Mr Smith's views."

"I don't think much will change other than their 'front'."

The students have shown that they will stand up to racism. Their determination has won a significant victory, but they've vowed to keep up the fight.



Movement in Colombia scores new victories

Protests, strikes and blockades have put president Ivan Duque under pressure, reports **Sophie Squire**

A MOVEMENT of mass protests in Colombia has forced new concessions from the right wing government.

A health reform bill that would give more power to private healthcare providers was voted down due to pressure from protesters last week.

And now the government has been forced to examine its own brutal treatment of protesters.

After a 17 hour meeting on Friday, the government issued a decree that security forces must use the appropriate levels of force against protesters.

In the next week the Senate will also move to debate the censure of Defence Minister Diego Molano after numerous complaints that protesters are being treated harshly.

Celebrating the retreat over healthcare, left wing Senator Alexander Lopez said on Twitter, "The people's struggle in the streets against years and years of injustice has achieved the shelving of a reform that would have destroyed health as a right and commercialised it even more in favour of a few."

The concessions are only the latest victories for the movement. Early on in the protests, the government was forced to announce that there would be no tax on essentials such as food and gas.

The National Strike Committee headed up by the leaders of major trade unions announced last Thursday it would be prepared to formally negotiate with the government.

Massacre

It said, "We will insist on the government to demilitarize our cities and stop the massacre of peaceful demonstrators. We will also demand an end to Duque's neoliberal measures."

But the Strike Committee also insisted that protests must continue.

Demonstrators have taken to the streets for four weeks running to rage against inequality and police brutality.

The protests began on 28 April and have been met with brutal repression, with Human Rights

BACK STORY

Mass protests have swept across Colombia for nearly a month

- Protests began at the end of April against plans to raise taxes on essential items
- Trade unions quickly called on people to join the mass protests—and won price subsidies on some goods to offset the tax rises
- The protests have now broadened into opposition to poverty, police violence and the government's handling of Covid-19

Watch reporting 55 deaths. But activists have refused to be cowed and have continued to protest daily, forcing the right wing government—headed by president Ivan Duque—to make concessions.

Blockades of Colombia's roads have severely affected goods distribution. And the government is set on crushing them.

According to the government, blockades have cost Colombia's economy around £1.1 billion and stopped the transportation of 700,000 tonnes of food.

Two blockades have forced the Cerrejon coal mine to cease production completely.

One is maintained by sacked workers at the mine and another was set up by anti-government protesters.

The Mines and Energy Ministry said blockades across the country have stopped the export of 200,000 tonnes of coal.

Duque's government looks to be cracking under the pressure of protests strikes and blockades.

But protesters shouldn't be satisfied by concessions and should stay on the streets and build the strikes to push for more.



On other pages...

Don't stop protests against the G7 summit in Cornwall >>Page 16

A MASS protest in Colombia last week

Nigerian strikers take on job losses

by LAI BROWN

Socialist Workers and Youth League, Nigeria

A MASSIVE strike kicked off in Kaduna, a state in the north western region of Nigeria, on Monday of last week.

It was a warning strike organised by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) union federation to protest against the state government's sacking of 4,000 workers. A procession of thousands of workers backed the strike on the streets.

They defied threats by the governor Nasiru El-Rufai to march courageously against poverty and hunger.

The strike, originally set to last five days, was suspended on

Wednesday of last week after the federal government stepped in and offered concessions.

More than 30,000 public sector workers in Kaduna have been sacked since the All Progressives Congress Party was voted into office there six years ago. Many of these workers have been denied their benefits.

The action that commenced on Monday will go a long way to rebuild workers' confidence.

But the state government has said it won't reverse the sacking of 4,000 workers and is hell-bent on implementing further neoliberal reforms in the public services. This means the struggle at hand must go beyond a warning strike.

Longer online at bit.ly/KadunaStrike

Strike march in Kaduna

BACK STORY

Millions of people joined a mass revolt in Chile in 2019

- Demonstrators demanded the resignation of president Sebastian Pinera and the implementation of a new constitution

- Over a million people took to the streets of capital Santiago at the height of the movement

- The protests forced Pinera to sack his cabinet—and he had to promise to restructure the government to "confront demands"

Gains for left parties in Chile

THE LEFT is celebrating impressive election results in Chile with left wing parties winning large sections of the vote.

The voting was for the 155 delegates who will write a new constitution to replace dictator Augusto Pinochet's 1980 document and the neoliberal model it enshrined.

The Lista del Pueblo (People's List) party won 15.1 percent of the vote. The Apruebo Dignidad (Consent, Dignity) party won 18.5 percent and the Lista del Apruebo party (Consent List) won 14.7 percent.

The government coalition's list secured only 37 seats in the assembly. It meant Chile's right

wing fell well short of the one-third bloc it had targeted to veto parts of a new constitution.

It was pressure from mass protests in 2019 that forced the government to concede the drafting of a new constitution.

But pressure has to continue to win real economic and social gains.

Take empty homes, not green space

THERE'S A quick solution to the housing crisis and the hard times that renters are having—take over empty homes.

I understand why there are demands for more house building and I don't completely oppose that.

But we have to think about the damage to the environment that will result—and the reduction in green spaces.

So let's make the proper and equal use of the existing housing stock a major priority.

Figures out last week showed there are a million homes not being used for residential use in England alone. One home in every 25 currently has no one living in it.

The government admits the total number of vacant homes is 665,628.

But in addition there are a further 320,000 homes sucked out of residential supply as so-called "second homes".

Then there are a further 60,000 classed as holiday homes.

Empty homes numbers are rising in nine out of ten council areas.

It is time to force the government to back local councils' calls for new powers to start bringing these homes back into use for homeless people.

None of this will happen without an assault on the idea that developers' profits can't be touched.

It's a political battle, not just a matter of putting forward good ideas.

Sheila Milne
Walsall

Inflation rise shows that we need pay fight

PRICES HAVE surged, and workers need to wake up and start fighting to defend living standards

The Office for National Statistics released new figures last week.

They showed the 12-month RPI inflation rate—the most accurate measure—has almost doubled from 1.5 per cent to 2.9 percent between March and April.

Even the CPI rate that the government likes has risen from 0.7 percent to 1.5 percent.

That means the Tories' recommended 1 percent



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Halting deportations means keeping up militant response

WE WON a massive victory over immigration deportations last week on the streets of Pollokshields in Glasgow.

Hundreds of people gathered after a Home Office van tried to abduct two Indian men.

But since the victory, the Home Office has announced they are determined to deport these men—Lakhvir Singh and Sumit Sehdev.

On Thursday last week there was another attempt at a raid in Paisley.

This is a major challenge, and it means we have to learn the lessons from Pollokshields.

It's despicable that people are being ripped from their homes as part of Tory home secretary Priti Patel's vicious attacks on

migrants and refugees. The two men targeted in Pollokshields have lived in our community for ten years.

The opposition to the raid showed the initiative and support that anti-racists can mobilise.

Within hours of the alarm being raised large numbers of people had surrounded the van and blocked the roads.

We chanted, shouted and sang, making sure our neighbours could hear us standing with them.

There was an obscene amount of police, but there was many more of us.

All attempts to divide us failed and we shouted "These are our neighbours—let them go."

As the numbers grew and so did

the energy, we were not going to let them take our friends without a fight.

With no other option, the police and the home office had to admit defeat.

I won't forget the moment we won and they opened the doors to the van and the two men emerged.

We proved in practice what is possible when we come together—we can defeat the dawn raids.

We want the Tories out and refugees and migrants in.

We must capture the energy that swept through the streets of Pollokshields last week, because only when we are united in action can we beat back racism.

Lorna McKinnon
Glasgow

Now give Rhodes the Colston treatment

REMEMBER LAST summer that glorious day when Black Lives Matter protesters in Bristol hauled down the statue of slaver Edward Colston and dumped him in the bay?

Remember how Tory ministers foamed at the mouth and Labour leader Keir Starmer told us that the protesters were "completely wrong".

Politicians of all stripes told us that the "proper channels" should have been used.

Inspired by the Bristol events there were huge protests outside Oriel College, Oxford university, where a statue of Cecil



Rhodes, the brutal racist imperialist stands on the high street.

Having refused to

remove the statue five years before, under pressure from mass protests, Oriel's bosses ordered an independent commission to decide on it's future.

After a lengthy wait, the majority on that panel were in favour of removal.

Yet Oriel bosses have now decided that due to costs and "complex planning processes" that the figure of this vicious racist must remain.

This will enrage people in Oxford—who may well look to Bristol to learn how they got rid of their racist statue for free.

Patrick Carmody
Oxford

Just a thought...

Palestine must win this time

I MARCHED with huge numbers of people in London for Palestine. It was so wonderful to see so many folk of all types and from all walks of life uniting.

It gave me new hope that liberation might come. But I have also felt that in previous rounds of international solidarity such as in 2009.

It cannot just be another round of the same protests and a return to what passes for "normality".

To my many friends who have come out for Palestine, I say no going back until victory.

Ahmed Yasser
West London

Two states will not be solution

I WANTED to express my thanks to Socialist Worker for your overall reporting and topic choice in the last few years of publication of the newspaper.

Not least I welcome your reporting of the events surrounding the persecution of the Palestinian population.

I must expressly highlight the article in the 12 May issue which highlighted that a two-state solution was and is a nonstarter for resolving this topic.

This is not a position sufficiently widely held in pro-Palestinian circles.

Mark
by e-mail

Does amber mean stop?

IT'S UTTERLY cynical for the government to say that people are allowed to fly to "amber list" countries—and then add that it's a bad idea.

It's just a way of being able to blame us if Covid-19 cases rise.

Mary Boyce
Lincoln

Welcome the Green surge

I'M GLAD the Greens are rising to become more of a challenge against the Labour Party (Letters, 19 May).

Instead of criticising them, socialists should rejoice that the dead hand of Labour is weakening and a left-ish alternative is growing.

Jane Bolam
Norwich

BATTLE WITHIN A TERROR STATE

Across the whole of Palestine there have been signs of a new wave of resistance to Israel's apartheid regime. Nick Clark talks to those on the front lines of the revolts

SOMETHING important has happened across Palestine—and it has the seeds of a new, mass revolt against Israel. A general strike last week became the most unified, coordinated act of resistance by Palestinians for decades—inside Israel's borders and areas under military occupation.

This new wave of revolt is, as Palestinian activist Bisan Abu Eisheh told Socialist Worker, “A general rage that exploded all of a sudden.”

It is “an accumulation of 70 years living under a number of different colonial situations, between the 1948 borders, Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.”

While people protested in their thousands across the West Bank, Palestinians who work inside Israel answered the general strike call on Tuesday of last week. What really shook Israeli politicians—more than the economic impact of the strike—was its political significance.



Palestinians who live in Israel are driven into ghettos designed to marginalise them

Israeli newspapers last week were filled with warnings that Israel is heading for “civil war” with Palestinians in its own borders. Israel has always claimed that its Arab citizens have the same rights as Jews. It even tries to give them a non-Palestinian identity—Israeli Arabs.

In reality, throughout its existence, Israel has driven the Palestinians who still live there into impoverished ghettos, designed to keep them marginalised.

The repression of the past month revealed that.

As Ramadan began Israel began a drive to keep Palestinians out of the Al-Aqsa mosque in east Jerusalem. Its border police attacked not just the Palestinians living under military occupation, but also those with Israeli citizenship.

Sawsan Zaher, deputy director of the Adalah legal centre which defends Palestinian human rights in Israel, described what happened.

“They blocked Palestinian citizens of Israel who wanted to arrive in Jerusalem,” she told Socialist Worker.

“They prevented 20 buses from entering Jerusalem. People started to get out and walk to Jerusalem—about an hour's walk. It was a huge violation of the right to worship for tens of thousands of Palestinian Muslims from east Jerusalem and also citizens of Israel.

“This happened at the same time as an attempted forced eviction of residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem.

“A lot of demonstrations started to happen by Palestinians in Arab towns in Israel. Instead of allowing them to protest peacefully the police started using

violence, attacking demonstrations.”

Resentment

Armed groups of Israelis organised coordinated attacks on Palestinian areas, while cops stood by. The violence not only exposed Israel's racism, but caused years of simmering resentment among its Palestinian citizens to boil over.

To the surprise of Israel's ruling class—and even to some Palestinians in the West Bank—the call for a general strike came from those inside its borders.

“Now it's obvious and so embarrassing for the Israel regime that people in the mixed and Arab cities inside Israeli territories are raging because they've been living in a dire situation,” said Bisan.

“This all of a sudden has led to this rage and it connected with what happened in Jerusalem and Sheikh Jarrah. It all just connected together.”

What's more, Bisan added, the unity across borders of the Palestinians in struggle is a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the Israeli state. It has demolished the idea that the struggle for freedom for Palestine is confined to Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

It is now being waged in the heart of Israel itself.

“This really puts a question about the whole existence of Israel as a colonial regime,” said Bisan.

“The Palestinians with their strike reconstructed the historic map of Palestine with their rage and resistance at oppression. This is a very unique moment.

“We had nothing to lose before—now we have gained something because we

are unified and standing alongside each other.”

He added, “What I hope to happen is to build on this and start talking seriously about a solution for the Palestinian cause, and a solution for the refugees.

“This has all taken the shape of a semi-intifada because of the generation younger than mine. This is the generation that has been marginalised and trashed, living with no hope or opportunity.

“Now they are raging and taking the streets and made everyone hear their voice.

“I am a member of a generation that never had hope. We were just surviving. The whole idea of reparations and freedom was a far off dream that maybe our kids will live.

“This the first moment I feel I have hope, because suddenly we can expose all the years of camouflage as an apartheid and colonial state.”

Palestinian citizens of Israel demonstrate in Haifa, Israel, last week to mark a nationwide general strike called to express solidarity for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip

‘We feel that this time it is different’

ONE OF the reasons that the call for a strike spread was because it wasn't imposed from the top of official Palestinian leadership organisations. Instead, it began as a call by activists. Though currently in London, Bisan has been in touch with friends and family members in Jerusalem and Haifa who have been part of the resistance.

“The strike was an idea that was discussed by a small amount of people who put it out there and it caught on,” he said. “That’s the spirit of how things are happening now—don’t wait for leadership. If you think of something, do it.” Wassim Ghantous, from Haifa, also said the new wave of protests there began independently of official organisations.

“People who rose up were not following any political party,” he told an online meeting in solidarity with the strike last week. “It was decentralised organisation.

“This uprising has included many people from the young generation.”

Bisan and Wassim both described how the people involved in the protests are forming their own structures of organisation.

“From many places I’ve heard about but also from witnessing what was going on in Haifa, it wasn’t a passive strike where you just stay at home. It was an active strike.

“Each city, each village and each neighbourhood gathered and did activities.

“They had discussions about what to do when you get arrested as an activist, what to do with your children during these protests. We had a media crew that’s also

organising posters and graffiti. So we feel that this time it’s different. This time Palestine has overcome the colonial fragmentary policies of Israel.”

Jerusalem-based activist Akram Salhab said, “What’s come out of this is this extraordinary spirit of self organisation.

“How do we come together and create structures that can, first of all, defend ourselves and how can we build on that?”

As the call for a strike gained momentum among activists it was backed by the official Palestinian leadership organisations.

Then, Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA), which has limited self rule in the West Bank, fell in behind it.

Palestinians there had also risen up and organised their own demonstrations against the occupation, and in solidarity with Jerusalem and Gaza. Mohammed, who lives in the West Bank city Hebron, told Socialist Worker, “Demonstrations are becoming more regular.

Prayers

“It used to be that people would go out and demonstrate after Friday prayers. Now every day something is happening in the West Bank.”

Mohammed warned that the PA will try to contain the protests.

“They did not initiate the protests,” he said. “They say the best way to engage with the Israelis is to embarrass the Israelis.

“It’s to say we are cooperating as much as possible and we want something in return. So everything they try to do is non-confrontational. But the Israelis have just co-opted them.

“The people are frustrated so the PA is allowing them to voice that but it doesn’t want it to get out of control.”

Yet the growth of new organisation among ordinary people could overcome that. “For the longest time Palestinians in the West Bank have always written those in Israel out as people who have been normalised.

“Now they were not only participating but taking the lead. People are saying new alliances could take place. People have seen the power that they have.”

Strikes can inspire more revolts

FOR DECADES Israel has tried to keep its Palestinian workforce marginalised. But last week they showed they have the power to rock Israeli society.

The strike hit Israel’s construction industry especially hard. Some 65,000 Palestinian construction labourers—many of whom travel in from the West Bank—make up to 70 percent of the industry’s workforce.

Just 150 of them came to work during the strike last week.

The strike hit public transport and cleaning services too.

Israel’s transportation ministry said 910 drivers—some 10 percent of all bus drivers—didn’t show up for work on the day of the strike. Egged, Israel’s largest transport company, said nearly 300 journeys had to be cancelled. The Kavim bus company asked passengers to avoid unnecessary travel.

Meanwhile, the Union of Cleaning Companies—a company that employs cleaners—said some 5,000 Palestinian cleaners didn’t work during the strike. Though it says this is just 6.5 percent of all Arab cleaning workers, its chair Avi Mizrahi said, “We felt their absence all over the country.

“We can’t work without them, they’re part of us.”

In a sign that bosses were worried, many threatened to sack workers for taking part.

Israel’s education ministry asked school heads for a list of teachers who took struck.

The strike had echoes of those that launched during the First Intifada between 1987 and 1993.

Strikes were a major weapon aimed at weakening the Israeli state. Then, like last week, Palestinians from the West Bank refused to cross into Israel for work.

The cost of putting down the uprising caused some Israeli commentators to question whether the occupation was sustainable.

Industries

But Israel has worked to exclude Palestinian workers from some key industries. And, importantly, the strike couldn’t touch the billions of pounds worth of military aid that Israel receives from the US.

The real power of the strikes and protests was to inspire resistance across the Middle East. Solidarity demonstrations in countries such as Egypt turned into strikes against their own rulers who cooperate with Israel.

Today, support for Palestinians has forced rulers of Arab countries that were prepared to make deals with Israel to condemn it.

Israel is afraid the revolt could spread across Palestine. In the background, it also fears what could happen if it spreads beyond.

A Palestinian man sits in front of closed shops during a general strike, in the West Bank city of Nablus last week (below,right) Israeli police have a long history of harassing Palestinians in Jerusalem (below)

“People would go out and demonstrate after Friday prayers. Now every day something happens

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties.

We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party online meetings

Booklaunch

SUPPORTERS OF independence reject Westminster rule

Breaking up the British state Scotland, independence and fighting for socialism

BRADFORD
Thu 3 June, 7pm
885-9187-7552

COVENTRY
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
823-945-1917

LONDON: SOUTH EAST
Thu 3 June, 7pm
529-913-6390

CAMBRIDGE
Thu 3 June, 7.30pm
681-800-4408

EAST MIDLANDS
Wed 2 June, 7pm
354-874-4790

SWANSEA & WEST WALES
Thu 3 June, 7pm
902-964-963



The Socialist Workers Party is holding online meetings during the coronavirus crisis. This is to ensure that there can still be collective local discussion, organising and actions.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings and other updates.

BIRMINGHAM
After the Sewell report—how do we beat institutional racism?
Wed 2 June, 7pm
281-634-5938

BRIGHTON & HOVE
Blair to Starmer—why won't Labour oppose the Tories?
Thu 3 June, 6.30pm
841-2142-3683

BRISTOL
Can technology solve climate change?
Thu 3 June, 7.30pm
688-397-3148

BURNLEY & PENDLE
How capitalism has destroyed our planet
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
446-409-5118

CARDIFF
Marxism and religion
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
630-181-4857

CHESTERFIELD
Greed and the Super League—how capitalism is destroying sport
Thu 3 June, 7pm
828-532-8731

CREWE & STOKE-ON-TRENT
Anarchism and socialism—are they different and does it matter?
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
883-6483-1263

DEVON & CORNWALL
Will Joe Biden increase imperialist tensions?
Thu 3 June, 7.30pm
865-2972-2883

DUDLEY
Free speech, the Tories and defending our rights
Wed 2 June, 7pm
869-514-7392

DUNDEE, ABERDEEN & PERTH
The Paris Commune of 1871, when workers "stormed heaven"
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
894-2628-7708

EDINBURGH
Institutional racism and the fight against the hostile environment
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
431-459-112

GLASGOW
Indigenous sovereignty and working class struggle in Canada
Thu 3 June, 7pm
879-2402-3259

HARLOW
France—Macron, racism and Islamophobia
Thu 3 June, 7.30pm
832-8746-7480

HOMER COUNTY
Islamophobia and racism—the politics of fear
Thu 3 June, 6.30pm
872-4922-1957

HUDDERSFIELD
The new imperialism—shifting balances of power
Wed 2 June, 6.30pm
290-168-1804

KENT
Can Britain's economy bounce back from Covid?
Thu 3 June, 8.15pm
434-623-8064

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE
Free speech, the Tories and defending our rights
Thu 3 June, 7pm
992-204-9372

LEEDS
Mind shift—what makes the human brain so unique?
Thu 3 June, 7pm
881-4770-0676

LIVERPOOL
A rebel's guide to Frida Kahlo
Wed 2 June, 7pm
493-925-5919

LONDON: HACKNEY
Free speech, the Tories and defending our rights
Thu 3 June, 7.30pm
854-8245-8715

LONDON: HARINGEY
Lenin—a revolutionary for today
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
459-388-1576

LONDON: ISLINGTON
Why won't trade union leaders lead a fightback?
Thu 3 June, 7pm
874-012-7970

LONDON: NEWHAM
Booklaunch: Rebellious Daughters of History with author Judy Cox
Wed 2 June, 7pm
288-098-8827

LONDON: SOUTH
Environment and the myth of overpopulation
Wed 2 June, 7pm
497-196-1801

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS
A rebel's guide to decolonisation
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
818-391-0420

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST
The Paris Commune of 1871, when workers "stormed heaven"
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
543-023-057

LONDON: WEST AND NORTHWEST
Greed and the Super League—how capitalism is destroying sport
Thu 3 June, 7.30pm
857-8308-2064

MANCHESTER
An introduction to Marxist economics
Wed 2 June, 7.15pm
323-178-7151

NORWICH
The Tories' war on "woke"
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
906-652-5299

OXFORD & THAMES VALLEY
What is Zionism?
Wed 2 June, 7pm
861-2001-6477

SOUTHAMPTON
Free speech, the Tories and defending our rights
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
381-513-5080

SHEFFIELD & SOUTH YORKSHIRE
Riots and resistance—police, violence and the state
Thu 3 June, 7pm
528-174-9278

PORTSMOUTH
After the Sewell report—how do we beat institutional racism?
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
488-934-2809

TELFORD
Can technology solve climate change?
Thu 3 June, 7.30pm
791-7178-2356

WOLVERHAMPTON & WALSALL
After the Sewell report—how do we beat institutional racism?
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
913-6646-7067

YORK & SCARBOROUGH
Greed and the Super League—how capitalism is destroying sport
Wed 2 June, 7.30pm
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An uncompromising history of colonialism with a flaw

Raoul Peck takes an inventive approach to documentary-making with series *Exterminate All the Brutes*. It's a film with an argument, says **Nick Grant**

READERS MAY know Raoul Peck from his films *I Am Not Your Negro*, *The Young Karl Marx* and *Lumumba*. Now he has produced a timely four-part documentary about genocidal white supremacy.

Its title, *Exterminate All the Brutes*, quotes from Joseph Conrad's 1899 novella *Heart of Darkness*, set in the Congo where Peck lived as a child. His father worked for the Lumumba government in 1960.

It encapsulates the imperialist attitude to those native peoples standing in the way of European land grabs.

The same phrase was used by Swedish writer Sven Lindqvist for the book that inspired much of Peck's thinking in this film.

The *Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, and Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing The Past—Power and the Production of History* are also influences.

Surprisingly, given that Peck makes a point of saying it's widely forgotten that revolution brought Haitian independence, he doesn't mention CLR James's book *The Black Jacobins*.

Displacement

Peck's looks at the displacement and extermination of Native Americans, the African slave trade, the rise of scientific racism, and the Holocaust.

He locates the origin of white supremacy in the 15th century Spanish Inquisition's obsession with "clean blood" in its population, excluding Muslims and Jews.

But his suggestion, that Charles Darwin was complicit in the development of the racial classification



EXTERMINATE ALL the Brutes dramatises the displacement and resistance of Native Americans

of humans is crass. "After Darwin it became acceptable to shrug your shoulders at genocide," says Peck.

He tears up the customary formalities of TV history documentary-making.

Firstly, he denies any bogus neutrality. His throaty, sometimes unclear authorial voice is explicitly partisan in commentary.

He includes home movie evidence of his family's experiences. The soundtrack combines commissioned and borrowed music, with many quirky inferences.

Secondly, Peck deploys every manner of visual presentation. You'll find archive documentary footage, contemporary drone camerawork, historical artefacts, paintings and photos.

There are cartoons, animated drawings and graphics, bold whole-screen text statements and slogans.

Josh Hartnett acts the part of multiple silent, murderous white guys in various places and times.

Peck finishes, "It is not knowledge

we lack. What is missing is the courage to understand what we know and draw conclusions." But he doesn't suggest what those conclusions might be.

More depressingly Peck argues that "Imperialism is a biologically necessary process".

This absorbing work will leave viewers with plenty to think about, even get angry with. But it is not on a par with his earlier works, and certainly no masterpiece.

Exterminate All the Brutes is available now on Sky Documentaries

An exciting and psychedelic album of Desert Blues

MUSIC

AFRIQUE VICTIME

By Mdou Moctar. Out now

AFRIQUE VICTIME is a rallying cry against imperialism past and present. From the virtuosic guitarist, singer, and songwriter Mdou Moctar comes this musical and political tour de force.

It uses the wild textures and melodies of desert blues to launch anti-colonialist discussions of African histories and futures. Following in the footsteps of the great

Ali Farka Toure and fellow Taureg musicians Tinariwen, Moctar takes desert blues to an exciting and psychedelic new place.

The nomadic Taureg people of the Sahara Desert have been subjected to brutal French colonialism which they fought in multiple rebellions.

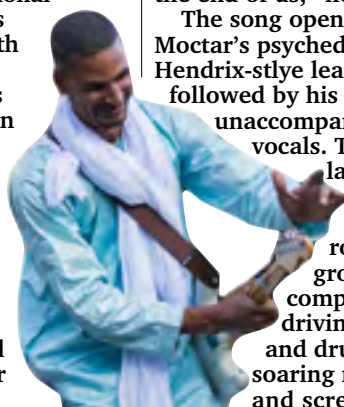
The creation of modern African states such as Niger, Mali, and Libya, carved up their traditional land, making them an ethnic minority.

The genre of desert blues arose against a backdrop of exploitation and anti-

colonial resistance. It resulted in a pan-African mixing of traditional Taureg melodies and rhythms with the psychedelic sounds of 1960s African American electric blues.

In the album's title track, Moctar takes this history of exploitation, and colonial oppression, and creates a cry for liberation.

"Africa is the



Mdou Moctar

victim of so many crimes, if we stay silent it will be the end of us," he sings.

The song opens with Moctar's psychedelic Hendrix-style lead guitar followed by his bold, unaccompanied vocals. Then it launches into a full rock band groove, complete with driving bass and drums, a soaring melody and screeching electric guitar

interludes. In contrast, the gentle love song *Tala Tannam* uses complex and delicate acoustic lead guitar and massed voices to create a sense of peace.

Other songs promote women's liberation, Taureg culture, and appreciation of the natural world and the desert landscape, which he venerates in the upbeat track *Asdikte Akal*.

All these elements come together to make this a compelling and radical new album.

Mataio Dean

DOCUMENTARY

DARK MATTER: A HISTORY OF THE AFROFUTURE

Available now on BBC iPlayer

ELEMENTS of black history are mirrored in staples of science fiction, this documentary says, including "alien" abduction, enslavement and rebellion.

It's this unlikely relationship that provides the inspiration for Afrofuturism, the broad cultural trend that encompasses works from Jean-Michel Basquiat to Grace Jones, Solange



Sun Ra

Knowles and Sun Ra.

In this film, we hear from artists across three continents who each use Afrofuturism to look at the horrors of the black past and imagine alternative futures.

The curator and writer Ekow Eshun traces uses of the idea through Ralph Ellison's mid-20th-century novel *Invisible Man*, and painter Kerry James Marshall's image of the same title.

Eshun follows this right up to the modern-day Black Lives Matter movement.

What's on at Bookmarks

The socialist bookshop

Breaking up the British State

Scotland, independence and socialism



Online booklaunch

6:30pm, Friday 4 June

Watch at bit.ly/BreakBritishState

SOcialists say we want to live in a world without nations and borders. We look at walls erected between people and in them, we see the hand of our rulers seeking to divide us along lines of country, ethnicity and religion.

That's why Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels declared in the Communist Manifesto that workers have "no country".

Does that mean we can ignore struggles for national independence such as those currently being waged for Kashmir, Kurdistan and Palestine? Should socialists instead focus solely on the business of class struggle?

Similar questions tore through the revolutionary socialist movement in Europe at the turn of the 20th century.

They were only resolved by the victory of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

To understand why, we need to look at how modern countries were born.

The nation states that exist today are a relatively modern invention, the first of which emerged with capitalism in 16th century Europe.

Previously, feudal states bound together many disparate peoples in looser formations where often there was no common language—let alone a unified system of currency, taxes, laws and taxes.

The newly powerful capitalist class sought to build unified nations that could aid the process of exploitation and accumulation. As their states came into being, this new elite developed a nationalist ideology that sought to bind their subjects together.

FROM THIS emerged the concept of the "national interest", and today's well-worn phrase, "We're all in it together." Of course there were divisions between citizens, but these must be secondary to our shared common nationality, it was said.

And in return for loyalty, the state dishonestly proclaimed that it would put the collective interest of all of its citizens before all others. So powerful were the forces behind the ideology of nationalism that it became the common sense of millions of people.

Bound up with the development of capitalist nations came intense rivalries between them, and empires that subordinated other peoples in lands near and far.

Many unwilling subjects were coerced into new nations, where their languages, traditions and cultures were subordinated or even made illegal.

And the fate of the peoples in the "New World", subsumed by the European empires was

A KURDISH protest in Germany for national rights and an end to Turkey's military assaults

IMPERIALISM AND NATIONAL LIBERATION

Across the world in the face of imperialism and occupation, demands are put forward for self-determination and national independence. Yuri Prasad examines the roots of such struggles and says how socialists should respond.

generally far worse. Denied the right to form their own nations, their lands and people were plundered, with the proceeds going to rich imperialists.

The way dominant nations repressed the desires of people they ruled over gave rise to a wave of national movements. And this sharply posed the question of how socialists should relate to them.

The most vital example at the end of the 19th century was Poland. There the drive for a



Revolutionaries should participate in movements for freedom but must offer a distinct strategy

separate Polish state, free from domination of the Prussian, Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, was led by the country's middle classes.

Many socialists—including the revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg—were deeply sceptical about the movement.

She believed capitalism had moved beyond the era of nation states into one where capital would operate on a global basis.

Those that clung to the idea of a "free Poland" were

reactionary and middle class elements that sought only self-advancement.

The independence fight could only serve to divide Polish workers from their natural allies—the working class of Russia, she said.

Luxemburg insisted that these two groups of workers should join in a common struggle.

Lenin, the future leader of the Russian Revolution, opposed Luxemburg and took a hard position in support of the demand for national self-determination in Poland and beyond. For him, such struggles could only be understood as part of the wider battle against imperialism.

He argued that winning workers in the imperialist nations to support the right of oppressed nations to break from empire was a step towards revolutionary consciousness.

In this understanding, Lenin followed in the footsteps of Marx and Engels.

They had argued that the British working class—which was at the time split between English and Irish labour—could only be united if it took up the cause of Irish freedom.

But Lenin went further, insisting that Communists should raise the slogan of self-determination to stir the masses in oppressed nations against their masters.

He wanted the poor in the anti-colonial movements to know that Communist workers in the imperialist countries were their allies.

This, he hoped, would allow them to go further than freeing themselves from the empire.

Their revolt could lead to a complete break from capitalism.

THAT THEME is taken up by fellow Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, who explained, "What characterises Bolshevism on the national question is that in its attitude towards oppressed nations, even the most backward, it considers them, not only the objects but also the subjects of politics."

Even the most impoverished people in the most oppressed nations could make history, said Trotsky.

Both Russians were particularly scathing about supposed revolutionaries that could not bring themselves to support national liberation struggles that weren't led by workers and the left.

After the British brutally suppressed the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, Lenin wrote a passionate defence of anti-colonial uprisings.

"To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically

non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church and the monarchy, against national oppression—to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution,” he said.

“So one army lines up in one place and says, ‘We are for socialism,’ and another, somewhere else and says, ‘We are for imperialism,’ and that will be a social revolution!”

“Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a ‘putsch.’”

Lenin’s argument that anti-colonial revolt can ignite struggle in the countries of empire has since been proved correct many times.

PERHAPS THE best example remains the 1968 revolt in America. It reached its height when the Black Power movement combined with the movement against the Vietnam War and the fighters of the Vietnamese resistance. The revolt at home and abroad together formed the most powerful threat to the US ruling class since the Civil War.

But Lenin also sounded two warnings to Communists.

First, he made a distinction between the duties of revolutionaries in the heart of empire compared to those in the colonies.

Addressing those in the colonies, he said that Communists must combine opposition to imperialism with clear support for the most radical methods possible.

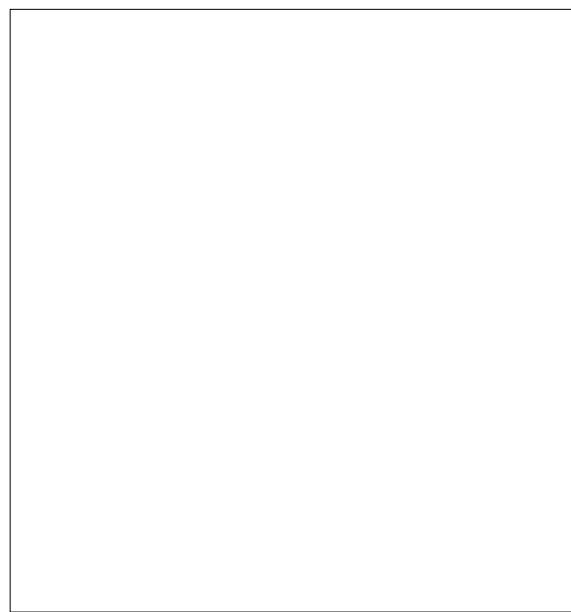
In practice that meant revolutionaries should participate in movements for freedom but must offer a distinct strategy that put the working class in the driver’s seat.

This could include general strikes and encouraging mutiny in the military—even though both tactics were abhorred by the conservative leaders of most national movements.

It also meant Communists should also turn their political fire on the bourgeois forces that often led the liberation forces.

The second warning related to forms of nationalism that can triumph only by oppressing others.

The victory of these campaigns, Lenin said, only had the effect of strengthening the hold of imperialism. The world today remains ravaged by imperialism



Protesting for Palestinian freedom in Haifa (top) Indigenous groups protest in Davao, Philippines (above)

and its wars. It is also characterised by the breaking up of states, and the desire to create new ones.

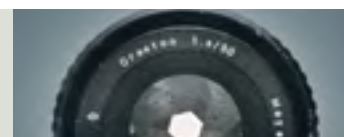
But in many ways, the struggle of oppressed nations is much more difficult today.

The world system of imperialism is ever more tightly regulated.

National minorities have continuously seen their aspirations for statehood raised and dashed when it has suited the main powers.

The only way for socialists to navigate their way through the web of territorial claim and counterclaim is to start from a straightforward position.

We are against those whose actions strengthen the hold of imperialism, and we support all those whose fight weakens the system.



FOCUS ON PALESTINE

One-state is the solution for Palestinian liberation

As the myth of a two-state solution falls apart, **Sam Ord** argues why a one-state solution will truly free Palestine and end Israeli occupation

IS THE solution in Palestine to create two states?

Certainly, that’s what US president Joe Biden believes.

Last month he “affirmed that the United States supports a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

But the claim that such a process is viable is being increasingly recognised as a myth. It is a deliberate distraction from tackling the injustice and oppression faced by the Palestinians.

No Israeli government has ever shown any sign of allowing a Palestinian state. Giving Palestinians a state would mean Israel falling short of its endeavour to occupy all of the territory.

The two-state solution originally appealed to some Palestinians as it appeared to offer the possibility of a peaceful route to a stable society.

But the talks and deals that claimed to signpost such a solution merely legitimised the Israeli occupation and maintained the oppression of Palestinians.

Signed

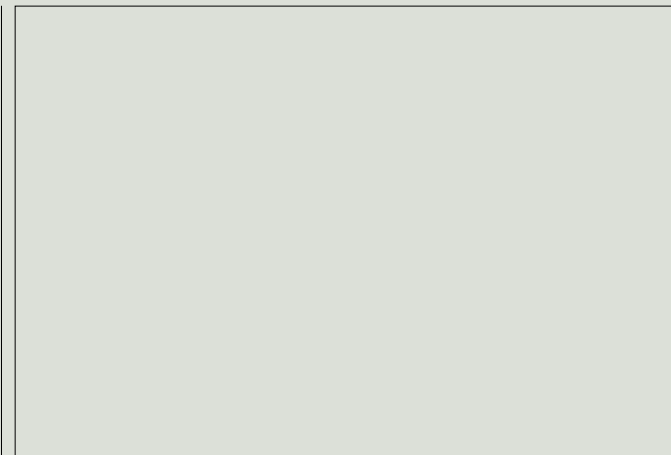
The idea of a two-state solution was central to the Oslo Accord In 1993, which the president of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Yasser Arafat, signed.

The “peace process” which followed the Oslo Accords shows that the two-state solution doesn’t work.

In the following three decades Israel has consistently sabotaged any hopes of “peace” while the Palestine Authority (PA) took responsibility for managing and policing Palestinians under occupation.

All the while Israel has massively grown the size and population of its settlements in east Jerusalem and the West Bank.

There are currently



THE CURRENT state means repression for Palestinians

800,000 Israeli settlers residing in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. Palestinian farms and homes are cleared to make way for the new settlements.

Israel would simply be unwilling to see that land returned to the Palestinians.

Any Palestinian state based on the land that’s left would be fragmented and totally under Israeli military control.

Israel spends over £14 billion on its armed forces annually. The US with its enormous military is Israel’s main ally—it relies on Israel to police and monitor the rest of the Middle East.

The PA, on the other hand, is weak and relies financially on charity handouts from international allies. And Hamas, the governing organisation of Gaza, is shunned by most other states and international organisations, because it fights back.

In reality, the partition of Palestine in 1948, creating a state of Israel based on discrimination against Arabs, could only

be racist. By agreeing to the two-state solution the PA accepts that racial division.

The collapse of the realistic prospect of a two-state solution has given greater currency to a one-state solution.

There are two versions of such a state. One is the constant expansion of Israel through settlements and the squeezing of Palestinians. When they resist, they will be offered only repression and death.

This is the one-state solution Israel is driving, with intensified repression marginalising the Palestinians.

Secular

The other is a democratic and secular state where Arabs, Jews and others could live alongside each other as they did before the British occupation after the First World War.

To achieve this will require tackling the Israel state and its imperialist backers.

It will mean a revolutionary movement against imperialism and the reactionary Arab rulers to overturn the present order, not just armed struggle for reforms.

Negotiations and “peace talks” orchestrated by the US will never return the land to Palestinians.

The recent Palestinian resistance and the solidarity in the region and more widely should give hope.

Instead of retreading the failed project of two states, there has to be a new impetus for a liberated one state.

READ MORE

● **The right of nations to self-determination**
Vladimir Lenin
bit.ly/LeninSD

● **The return of the national question**
Chris Harman
International Socialism journal 56
bit.ly/HarmanNational

● **Empireland: How Imperialism Has Shaped Modern Britain**
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Don't stop protest against the G7 gathering

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

THE LEADERS of some of the most powerful states in the world will gather in June in Carbis Bay, Cornwall for the G7 summit.

And they are so fearful of the response from protesters that a 60-mile exclusion zone has been created around the summit to prevent demonstrations.

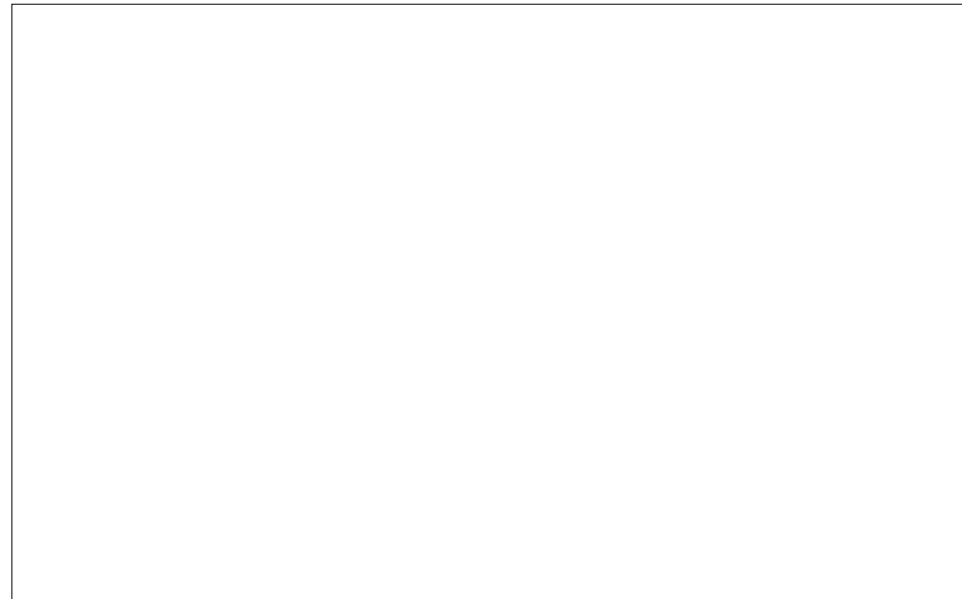
Every attempt is being made to ensure protesters don't get anywhere near where the summit is being held.

Tony Staunton, an activist in the Resist G7 Coalition, told Socialist Worker, "The police and the Tories are using restrictions to crush mobilisations.

"The police have identified some legal protesting zones for us.

"Any protests organised without agreement with the police will be deemed illegal," he said.

"We've been offered half a car park in Falmouth and a playing field in Exeter. Plymouth Hoe—60 miles away from Carbis Bay—has



WORLD LEADERS will descend on the Carbis Bay Hotel in Cornwall from 11 to 13 June

also been identified as a place where we are legally allowed to protest.

"The kind of repression that the Tories want to impose with the police and crime bill is happening right now in the south west.

"The Resist G7 coalition has decided to boycott all of these protest sites."

There will be real protests and an alternative conference instead.

The G7 is a collection of major, mostly Western, states including Germany, France, Britain and the US.

In addition to these countries, Boris Johnson has invited the heads of state of Australia, South Korea

and India. These additions were first recommended by former US president, Donald Trump.

From 11 to 13 June world leaders will gather in a luxury hotel to discuss the climate crisis, coronavirus and "global democracy".

But these won't be the only subjects discussed at

the summit. The restoration of alliances will be vital for those attending, especially for US president Joe Biden. Biden along with Johnson will likely look for support in their drive against China and Russia.

Britain's foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, said there is an "increasing demand and need for an agile cluster of countries that share the same values and want to protect the multilateral system."

Climate

Ahead of the Cop26 climate conference in November, the summit will provide an important meeting point for countries present to decide on their agenda.

Any resolutions made at either summit are, of course, likely to fall short of what is needed to address the climate crisis.

The drive to war, the support for Israel against the Palestinians and inaction on the climate crisis are all reasons to protest against the G7.

Tony said, "Protests are an opportunity to show our opposition to climate

inaction, imperialism and war.

"Johnson has agreed to a 40 percent increase in nuclear missiles. The threat of war and the use of nuclear weapons is very real."

The clampdown is also hitting local residents. They will be subjected to three weeks of security checks, increased police presence and infrequent public transport

In restricted areas in Falmouth and St Ives residents and workers will be required to show two forms of identification and a utility or tax bill that links them to a local address.

A cruise ship, moored in Falmouth bay is being used to house hundreds of cops deployed to the area.

Mobilisations against the G7 have the power to bring together those from different movements.

These demonstrations will also be important in the fight against the continuing assault by the Tories on the right to protest.

Socialists should join and support the mobilisations against the G7 Summit.

For details go to resistg7.org

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Police use mental distress claims to target Muslims

A new report has found that counter-terrorism police are using claims of mental distress to lock up and intimidate people writes Isabel Ringrose

ANTI-TERROR police are forcing extremely vulnerable people into mental health units—and disproportionately these people are Muslim.

Through Vulnerability Support Hubs, police are faking accusations about mental health to marginalise, lock away and stigmatise people.

And they are getting away with it by using medical care as an excuse.

This is what a new report by medical charity Medact found.

The report exposes “a disturbing trend in counter-terrorism’s turn to mental health.” it describes how thousands of people suspected of “potential extremism” have been assessed through the Hubs.

It says Vulnerability Support Hubs “blur the boundaries between security and care in ethically problematic ways.”

Those assessed at the hubs have been referred to the racist scheme Prevent if they are suspected by the police of suffering mental distress.

Muslims are disproportionately referred to Prevent—despite some claims that it mostly tackles far right extremism.

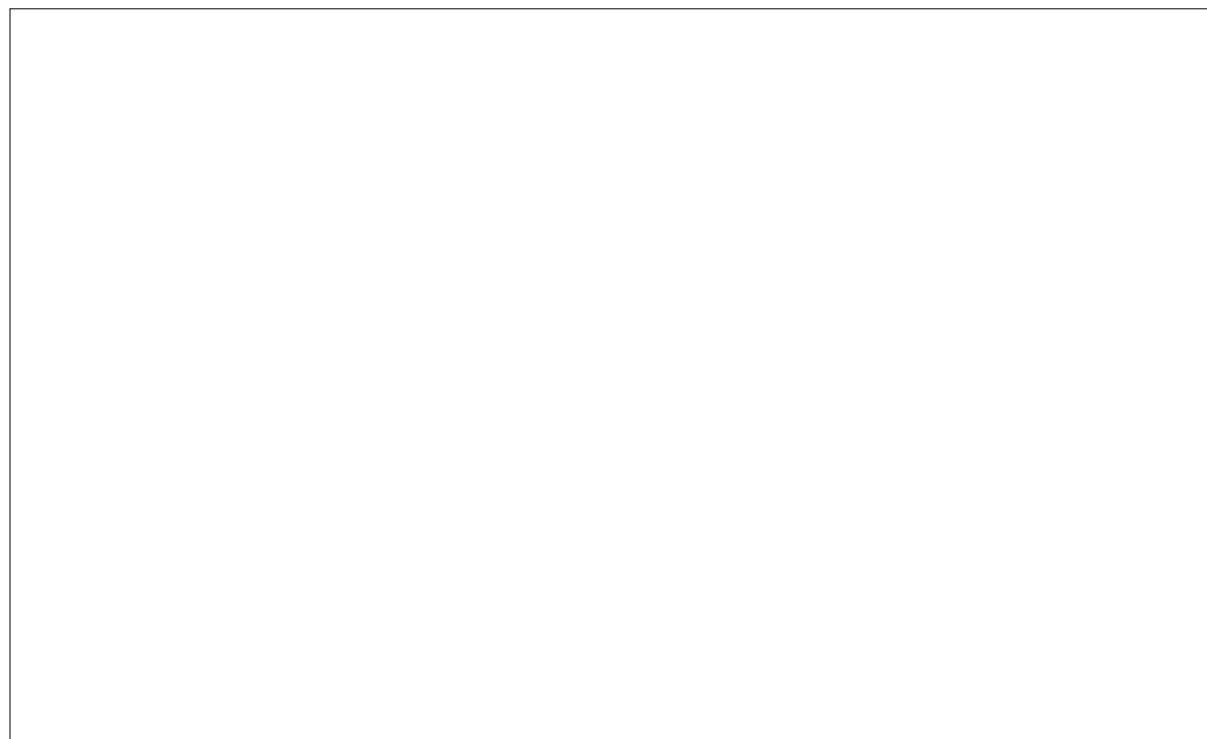
Referred

According to the report, Muslims are “at least 23 times more likely to be referred to a mental health hub for ‘Islamism’ than a white individual for ‘far right extremism’”.

Prevent claims to act in the interest of public health, because it intervenes before a crime takes place.

But all this does is “turn political issues into individualised mental health problems of particular groups,” the report says.

Mental health professionals are expected to support counter-terrorism



COUNTER TERRORISM police use mental distress claims to target Muslims and other minorities

officials when they request information. This is then used to pursue convictions—despite Prevent saying it is a pre-crime precaution.

And it is clear the police are finding new ways to criminalise and scapegoat Muslims. The three hubs in London, Birmingham and Manchester are run alongside the biggest counter-terrorism units in England.

In one case in the North Hub, a man with schizophrenia was sectioned after refusing to comply with Prevent’s “deradicalisation” programme, despite the Home Office insisting it’s voluntary. But, due to

their secrecy, they have been subject to little scrutiny.

“This lack of transparency is itself a major ethical concern since it severely limits possibilities for proper accountability,” the report says.

According to the report, many of those referred are children—mostly teenagers, with the youngest just six years old.

And only some of those referred to the hubs actually have mental health conditions.

Most of those who do are already in contact with mental health services and have been referred to them. In

the North Hub this accounts for 42.6 percent of all referees.

The consequences are low levels of trust in health services, and heightened fear among Muslims when seeking help for their mental health at the risk of being referred to Prevent.

“This is in turn likely to exacerbate racialised health inequalities,” the report explains.

It concludes that Vulnerability Support Hubs should be scrapped “along with the entire Prevent programme in healthcare.”

Read the full report at bit.ly/Medact0521

Service faces no scrutiny

THE REPORT, that scrutinises the Vulnerability Support Service, found that the counter-terrorism police unsurprisingly “strenuously resisted disclosing” documents.

Counter-terrorism police can impact treatment by influencing how referees are medicated. And they push NHS mental health professionals to perform surveillance functions.

One man was diagnosed with schizophrenia after being perceived to be “acting in an odd manner” by police because he regularly visited London landmarks.

Another individual “failed to engage on numerous occasions” with the programme. After being sectioned, treated and discharged, the man was suddenly “willing to engage”.

The report says “this raises serious concerns about possible coercion and the potential use of psychiatry to facilitate cooperation with police.”

To put it another way—cops can use the threat of sectioning someone to make them comply.

Another person was diagnosed with schizophrenia “became more stable on his medication”. But this was only after intervention by counter-terrorism police following “vague security concerns”.

According to the report there have been no ethical guidelines developed for the Hubs in the five years they have been in operation.

This means the rollout is “without any clear evidence of the scheme’s impact on the individuals referred”, the report warns.

Case studies reveal mental health assessments carried out by Hub staff often happen with a Prevent officer or cops present.

Hub documents praise this as a “good example of collaborative working”. According to Medact, “this is potentially highly problematic”.

It says a police presence not only delays recovery, but can worsen someone’s condition whether they need assistance or not.

Racism led to unfair treatment

A SURVEY found NHS workers drew on “representations in popular culture” to understand “‘extremism’ and ‘radicalisation’ for which they are asked to be vigilant.”

Given the Islamophobia pumped into society, this has led to the unjust targeting of Muslims.

One person referred on to the scheme was pushed to the Vulnerability Support Hubs following a Prevent referral after “concerns that he had converted to Islam in prison”.

At the North Hub 41.7 percent of referrals were white.

But the combined total referred from different non-white groups was almost equal at 41.2 percent

This shows that non-white people are disproportionately

being referred to the Hubs.

And 48 percent of referees were not born in Britain—demonstrating increased attacks on migrants and refugees.

The report explores how “racism has a long history within psychology and psychiatry.”

And it also finds that minority groups are often disproportionately associated with possible threats.

What’s more, “this perception is highly likely to be compounded when racialised individuals experience mental ill health.”

So black people, the report says, are three times more likely to be diagnosed by the NHS with schizophrenia than average—and are more likely to be sectioned when they are.

Confidentiality was ignored

CONFIDENTIALITY is supposedly a central principle in healthcare. But, the report explains, Prevent is eroding the expectation of confidentiality.

The police deny sharing “health or police-related information unless it is judged necessary and appropriate to safeguard the individual or protect others from harm”.

Yet a key purpose of the Hubs is to support police “in liaising effectively with health services to seek and share information”.

This, according to Hub documents, is actually

protecting police and health workers from breaching confidentiality laws.

So provision was made to sidestep legislation.

But the report says “this is healthcare aiding prosecution, not meeting mental health needs”.

And the Hubs documents reveal how the police built the programme on unreliable assumptions between mental health and terrorism.

Despite claims that there is a link between terrorism and mental health, the report finds there is limited evidence to support this conclusion.

Determined Thurrock council strike halts cuts to pay

by ISABEL RINGROSE

DETERMINED STRIKES by workers at Thurrock council in Essex have pushed back assaults on their pay.

The 90 workers faced losing between £1,200 and £3,800.

The Tory-run council planned to slash highway maintenance, refuse and street cleaning workers' pay.

Bosses also wanted to cut payments for working unsocial hours, overtime, night shifts and bank holidays.

Thurrock Council has now, according to the Unite union, made "positive changes" to their original proposal, which will mean members will not have to suffer a reduction to their pay.

Around workers have been on strike since 13 April.

They headed back to work on Monday.

Justice for Refuse and Cleaning Workers, a campaign group in London and Essex, said, "From the outset all that we wanted was our existing terms and conditions and pay."

"This wasn't about a pay rise, but about the basic idea that those on the lower end of the scale who worked throughout the pandemic would not be made worse off."

"The support that we have had from the residents has been amazing and we want to thank you all."

Some 90 percent of workers had voted for the strikes with a huge turnout of around 70 percent.

Unite regional officer Michelle Cook said, "This deal is a victory for the workers who stood firm for six weeks in a strike to defend their pay."

"The workers and the residents of Thurrock will be pleased that the council has amended these plans and services can get back to normal."

"These essential workers, who were applauded for their work through the pandemic, now deserve to be applauded for the

BACK STORY

Strikes by Thurrock council in Essex workers which began in April have forced the council to concede.

● During the strike, bin collections were only carried out up until 9am, meaning that only half of the regular collections took place

● Lively picket lines saw strikers use a sound system to make it loud and clear that they were not going anywhere until their demands were met

solidarity and determination they showed.

"When workers organise, workers win" Michelle added.

And trade unionist Willie Howard added that the strikers "faced down police harassment,

"Antisocial behaviour notices, smear campaigns, threats from thugs and the full propaganda machine of a well-funded local authority."

"We often hear the phrase 'workers won't pay the price for the pandemic' bandied about," he said. "The unfortunate reality is that we will—unless we organise, we stick together and we fight back."

Vigilant

Howard said although the strikers are calling this a win "we remain ready and vigilant" if the council reneges on the deal.

"The victory here isn't just for these workers. It's for all of us," he added.

"Organising works—we need it at the heart of our unions."

The win in Thurrock will be a boost to all workers currently striking over plans by bosses to inflict worse pay and conditions by bosses in the wake of the pandemic.

Strikes and solidarity is the way to push them back—and show where the real power for change lies.



THURROCK COUNCIL strikers on the picket lines in Essex

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

BUS WORKERS

Fire and rehire was thwarted at Go North West, but at what price?

AFTER 85 days of an all-out strike, 400 Manchester bus drivers employed by Go North West have beaten back bosses' plans to fire and rehire the workforce. But the company has still pushed through serious attacks on the workforce.

Strikers should be proud of their determined struggle, far better than buckling to bosses' blackmail.

Go North West planned to save £1.8 million as part of a "turnaround plan" for the Queens Road depot.

Bosses demanded drivers accept new contracts to work longer hours on the same pay—or face the sack.

The overall effect would have been drivers losing wages of up to £2,500 a year.

Workers launched an indefinite strike on 28 February and held regular pickets that won support from workers in the city.

Following negotiations between Unite general secretary Len McCluskey and Go North West bosses a deal was presented to a mass meeting of workers at the Queens Road depot this week.

It was accepted in a ballot—although around 22 percent of strikers voted No.

Unite has hailed the result as a "huge victory" and certainly



ON THE picket line

strikers have blunted many of the bosses' assaults. Fire and rehire won't be used again.

Some other attacks are now off the table.

But at the same time, Unite accepted large concessions. These include meal breaks becoming unpaid and compulsory overtime if a bus runs late.

And longer shifts mean bosses will cut jobs.

Surprise

But this is no surprise because Unite offered its own £1.3 million cuts package as an alternative to fire and rehire before the strikes began.

Not every worker is satisfied by the deal. That nearly a quarter of those who voted were against the

deal is important and raises the question of how could more have been won.

Unite could have tried to spread disputes to other Go North West garages.

It could have tried to picket out the depots where scab operators were running services on the strikers' routes.

Instead it kept the strikes narrowly focused on one depot.

Unite has pledged to try to win back the concessions, but that will take more struggle.

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey said, "This is a tremendous victory by Unite's members at Go North West who through their dedication, solidarity and commitment have defeated the attempt to fire and rehire them."

Sharon Graham, a candidate in the Unite general secretary elections, said, "Congratulations to all our members at Go North West. I was very privileged to stand beside you with leverage and help push Go North West back. Thank you for your endorsement for me to be Unite's next general secretary."

Strikes are the way to win against fire and rehire. But the outcome should not be negotiated cuts.

Sam Ord

EDUCATION

Liverpool fight for jobs and education

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

WORKERS AT the university of Liverpool took to picket lines on Monday for their first round of strikes.

University bosses planned to sack up to 47 staff in the faculty of health and life sciences. This figure has been reduced to 32 after the strike vote.

Strikes were set to continue until Friday this week and then restart from 1 to 4 June and then 7 to 11 June.

The university has ranked workers to justify making some staff redundant.

Mark, a member of the UCU union at the university, told Socialist Worker that the way of measuring lecturers' productivity is unfair.

"The university is measuring the output of university workers in a way that just isn't reliable."

"We worked out as a union branch that some Nobel prize winners wouldn't keep their jobs according to the assessment that the university was using."

Mark added that the university have already had to scrap one particular metric



STRIKERS ON Monday

PICTURE: UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL UCU

of measuring performance due to pressure and replace it with another.

"University management is in complete disorder around this. This means that it is a very winnable dispute," Mark added.

On Monday strikers organised to picket in places that would have the greatest impact even though much of the campus is still locked down due to Covid.

One striker told Socialist

Worker, "On Monday we looked at where workers were teaching in the days going forward we'll picket outside so we can catch more people and tell them about the strikes."

Mark added that, "We've pushed for there to be physical picket lines around campus, constantly making the argument that striking is the way that we win this dispute."

Almost 300 people

attended a strike rally on Monday including student groups and university workers from other institutions taking part in disputes.

The university has already attempted to turn students against university workers.

Concern

A spokesperson from the university released a statement saying, "We recognise that industrial action will be a cause of concern for staff and students alike."

"We are particularly disappointed that it has been called during our students' assessment period."

But students have not been swayed and organised a solidarity rally for their lecturers.

Strikers have also

organised teach-outs and planned to take a knee with other trade unionists across Britain on the anniversary of George Floyd's death.

The strikes at Liverpool university are an important battle in the fightback against restructuring to sack workers and make even more profit.

●Messages of support to laout@liverpool.ac.uk and donate to the strike fund at bit.ly/UCUlivestrikefund

GOODLORD



Strikers hit back

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Sacked for opposing attacks

BOSSSES AT Goodlord property services firm in London have sacked workers striking against fire and rehire.

On 22 February over 20 members of the Unite union in the referencing section began an indefinite strike.

They were facing contract changes that would see pay plummet from £24,000 a year to £18,000.

Management dismissed strikers on Wednesday of last week.

Referencing staff, the lowest paid at the company, were the only workers to come under attack from fire and rehire attacks, as well as missing out on full furlough pay.

The original contracts for around half of the striking workers expired during the strike.

As they refused to sign up to new contracts, the workers were dismissed.

The remaining half of the workers voted to continue striking over these dismissals and other

grievances in a further ballot that closed on 26 April.

These nine workers have now been dismissed.

Unite said the workers were within the 12-week protected period provided by the new ballot and were dismissed for an "automatically unfair reason".

Unite union regional officer Steve O'Donnell said, "Goodlord's leadership has used the pandemic to opportunistically cut wages and told impacted staff they can survive on the poverty wages by moving out of London and working from home."

"They have brought in scab workers and targeted striking staff."

Strikers and their supporters joined a protest on Tuesday to show bosses that the fight continues.

It's crucial Unite does not allow bosses to get away with this assault. Fire and rehire needs to be stamped out.

Isabel Ringrose

●Tweet messages of support to @unitelondonitc

SCHOOLS

Two wins, and four others battle on

by SAMORD

Nottingham Academy—After two days of strikes and the threat of more action workers have won a new offer from management.

Workers in the NEU union were fighting a rushed restructure of the school which would have been disruptive to the students who have already missed a large proportion of their secondary education.

It would have also forced some staff to reapply for their own jobs.

Strikes have been withdrawn for next week.

Harris Academy, Tottenham—Following the threat of strikes, workers at this north London academy have won their demands.

The school tried to force a reorganisation that threatened 22 workers with redundancy. NEU general secretary Kevin

Courtney said, "After lengthy negotiations, we are pleased to have reduced the number of compulsory redundancies for NEU members at Harris Academy, Tottenham to zero."

The threat of strikes also won the lifting of a proposed statutory cap on voluntary redundancy payments and gains for women workers and migrants.

Peacehaven school Brighton—The NEU has announced further strikes as workers battle academisation. The first strike was set for Tuesday this week.

Tendring Tech College—Workers in Essex are set to strike on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday this week in a fight against redundancies. Students launched a petition calling for the trust to give up control of the school.

It was launched by a

Year 11 pupil who collected over 1,400 signatures in under 24 hours.

Shrewsbury College—Workers continue fighting the victimisation of NEU rep John Boken. A further strike was planned for Wednesday this week.

●Messages of support to jean.evanson@neu.org.uk

Islington Sixth Form College, north London—Teachers plan to strike again on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday this week following a confident and lively picket last week.

NEU members are fighting increased workloads that includes an additional 13 evenings interviewing potential students.

Management has threatened to not pay teachers the recommended pay award if they strike

●Messages of support to neu@islingtonteachers.org

FOOD

Fire & rehire at Weetabix

WEETABIX BOSSES are trying to force through fire and rehire at the company's Northamptonshire factories. But workers are fighting back.

Engineers at factories in Kettering and Corby in the Unite union were set to begin a strike ballot on Thursday this week.

Weetabix has issued the engineers with new contracts and work patterns, which will result in major cuts in shift allowances.

Some of the engineers will lose £5,000 a year.

Unite regional officer Sean Kettle said, "Unite will not sit idly by and allow our members to be fired and rehired."

Unite regional secretary for the East Midlands Paresh Patel said, "Weetabix should be paying a bonus for working through the pandemic, not attempting to slash wages."

ROUND-UP

■ **STRIKERS AT the Jacobs Douwe Egberts (JDE) coffee plant in Banbury, Oxfordshire,** were set to strike for 72 hours from Wednesday to Saturday this week.

This follows two 24-hour strikes and a continuous overtime ban since 1 May by the 291 workers.

Plans to fire and rehire the workforce will see workers lose up to £12,000 a year.

A protest, the fourth consecutive one, was also held outside the coffee site last Saturday.

Production at the site has been "ground down" and may now lead to shortages for top brands such as Tassimo, Kenco and L'OR Coffee.

■ **WORKERS AT waste collector Veolia** are balloting for strikes over pay freezes.

The Unite union has warned of "a big stink" coming this summer if workers from the commercial bin service collection strike.

The ballot opened last Friday and closes on 7 June. Veolia operates from over

25 depots across Britain. Bosses are attempting to impose a pay freeze of workers for 2021—as well as not making a pay offer for 2020.

These freezes will cost workers £20 a week in wages.

■ **EALING CIVIL Enforcement Officers** in west London have announced new 72-hour strikes, beginning on 1 June and 9 June.

They work for outsourcer Serco and are fighting the targeting of individual staff and the misuse of the absence policy

The Unite union condemned a move by Ealing council to have a Unite Serco rep removed from his duties.

■ **STRIKES BY** around 170 environmental workers in Norwich were set for this week.

Unite union members working for arms-length company Norwich City Services Ltd were set to strike from 26 May to 2 June and Union members on 26, 27, 28 May and 1, 2 June.



HEALTH SECRETARY Matt Hancock claimed herd immunity was not a Tory strategy

PICTURE FLICKR/DOWNING STREET

HERD IMMUNITY WAS THE PLAN

by YURI PRASAD

DOMINIC CUMMINGS was set to give evidence to parliament this week that could expose some of the lies about the Tories' deadly handling of the pandemic.

He has already revealed senior ministers planned to respond to Covid-19 by letting infections rip through Britain in a bid to create "herd immunity".

That's a fact well-known to readers of Socialist Worker, but now it is coming straight from the horse's mouth.

Cummings last weekend accused health secretary Matt Hancock of lying with his claim that the government had never intended to pursue herd immunity.

The prime minister's disgraced former senior adviser said allowing the virus to spread was "literally the official plan in all docs/graphs/meetings until it was ditched".

He added that the tactic was only abandoned at

the start of March when it became clear that the death toll would be in the hundreds of thousands.

At a press conference in March 2020, chief scientific advisor Sir Patrick Vallance said, "It's not possible to stop everybody getting" Covid-19.

That was a hint that herd immunity was indeed the government's plan.

Vallance went on, "You want some immunity in the population. We need immunity to protect ourselves from this in the future."

But just days later, hapless Hancock wrote in The Daily Telegraph newspaper, "We have a plan, based on the expertise of world-leading scientists. Herd immunity is not a part of it."

Hypocritical spin doctor Cummings could reveal more of the Tories' plans to allow hundreds of thousands to die in a bid to keep profits flowing.

He does not have clean hands himself. In March last year, the Sunday Times



130,000 HEARTS on the memorial wall show the Tories' failures
PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

This lie would help them 'unlock the country' and end restrictions

reported that at the end of February Cummings had outlined the government's strategy as "herd immunity, protect the economy and if that means some pensioners die, too bad."

The Tories' toxic handling of Covid-19 continues.

It was revealed this week that ministers ignored the first signs of a sharp rise in B.1.617.2 "Indian variant" infections.

Evidence appeared in

sewage tests in Bedford three weeks ago.

Public health officials say tests of the town sewage water had indicated a rapid rise in infections at the start of May.

These were possibly linked to the new variant.

Ministers saw the potential for an outbreak.

But they kept their focus on rising cases in the north west of England to fit their narrative that these were "localised cases".

This lie would help them "unlock the country" and end restrictions.

Revealed

Second, it was revealed that the privatised test and trace service failed to tell many local authorities about hundreds of positive cases throughout April and May.

Many of the worst affected councils are now at the centre of the rapid spread of the new strain.

The BBC this week passed local authority reports that show the number of missing

cases was highest in Blackburn with Darwen in Lancashire. More than 290 cases were not passed on.

As a result of the failure, local authorities were unable to alert the close contacts of those infected and instruct them to isolate.

The report says that "the rapid spread of Indian variant cases may be partially or largely attributable to risks in the international travel control system."

It adds, "These were exacerbated by the sporadic failure of the national test and trace system."

NHS Test and Trace is run for profit by some of the biggest failures in corporate history, including Serco.

It has been backed by some £37 billion of public money.

The fact that new strains of the coronavirus are circulating in England ought to be ringing alarm bells in the government.

Its eagerness to further lift coronavirus restrictions carries a grave risk of encouraging a new wave.